The representation of women in North East popular song 1790 – 1850.

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ABSTRACT

This project intends to uncover something of the way in which women were portrayed in songs which were popular in the North East of England between *circa* 1790 and 1850.

The dissertation defines the parameters for the research: why the period is significant, the area constituting the 'North East', and why the investigation of the representation of women is important.

The possible meanings of 'popular' are explored and a definition for the purpose of this research is offered, proposing that 'popular' covers material which was available in the region in the period. As this creates an unmanageably large pool of works for examination, the dissertation explains that the choice of songs has been made ultimately on the basis of their interest as well as their relationship to the themes of the research.

Recognizing the potential for a modern bias in analysing the songs, the project has examined them under six subject headings drawn from Mary Wollstonecraft's book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. This work, published in 1792, challenged prevailing constructs of femininity. The analysis of the songs found that some supported the status quo, while others portrayed women in rôles or situations suggesting that a different reading was possible. Sometimes the experiences described in the songs were reflected in reports of events in local newspapers of the era.

The research found that there is a substantial body of songs depicting a wide range of female experience. There was little easily-identifiable change in the portrayal of women over the period. Reflections on the findings suggest that it is reasonable to believe that the songs were likely to have had some influence on the attitudes of those who heard them, and, in the light of the themes of the material, that this would reinforce the stereotypes of the time. However, there is scope for further research here, to investigate the repetoire and the constitution of 'audiences' of various kinds, and to investigate whether there is evidence of people's responses to the songs.

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I apologize to those who have been neglected in the latter stages of this project; you know who you are!

This work is dedicated to Maddy, Abbie, and Rose, with grateful thanks for getting me singing again, and in heartfelt appreciation of all you do to draw others into this life-enhancing activity.

NOTES ABOUT SOURCES

The Special Collections

The Special Collections section of Newcastle University Library contains chapbooks and nineteenth century locally-produced song books which were consulted for the purposes of this research. Some of the titles are very similar and are often lengthy, and most of the material is undated. Only rarely is there a named author for the songs, although it is sometimes possible to establish the author from other material. Usually the publisher was also the editor of the work.

To fulfil the need for traceability while keeping the references as simple as possible, the following conventions have been adopted:

- A separate section for this material has been included in the References, showing the appropriate library shelfmark.
- Where there is a conventional title for the work, this appears in the footnotes (and as a short form if necessary) and in the References.
- Where there is no title or other readily-identifiable feature, the name of the publisher will be enough to trace the work from the footnotes to the References and thence to the Library.

FARNE – Folk Archive Resource North East

This is an online collection of texts, music, and sound recordings held by Gateshead Library available at http://www.asaplive.com/fnesearch
Full details of website appears in footnotes, and then as short form FARNE

The Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads

This collection holds over 30,000 ballads in digitised versions of the original sheets, and is available at http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm
Each record in the catalogue represents one edition of a broadside ballad sheet. The shelfmark is the unique identifier of the individual item, and this is used in the footnotes, which appear as Bodleian / *shelfmark*. Works from the following local publishers are quoted:

Angus (Newcastle) 1774 – 1825
Fordyce (Newcastle) 1840
T Hoggett (Durham) 1816 – 1843
T Huntley (Sunderland) 1851
J Marshall (Newcastle & Gateshead) 1810 – 1831
J K Pollock (North Shields) 1815 - 1855
Stephenson (Gateshead)1821 - 1850
S Thompson (Newcastle) 1823 – 1825
J Walker (Durham) 18 –
Walker (Durham) 1797 - 1834

The Roud Folk Song Index (EFDSS Vaughan Williams Memorial Library)

The Roud Index comprises some 143,000 references to songs known in the oral tradition in English from many different countries. Songs often have several different titles, and the Roud Index identifying number allows all versions to be retrieved. The Index is available at http://www.efdss.org/cgi-bin/cross=off&index_roud=on&access=off
References appears in footnotes as Roud (*number)*

19th Century British Newspapers

These may be viewed through the University library portal on http://www.find.galegroup.com/bncn/retrieve.do References in footnotes are to the newspaper from which the quotation comes, with the date of publication. The newspapers are only available to those with access.

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POPULAR SONG CIRCA 1790 – 1850

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1 I was aware of the existence of North East popular songs at least from the age of three. I know this because one of my earliest memories is of being on a tramcar in Gateshead (they had all been withdrawn by 1951[1]), and being told by my father to 'Keep your feet still.' My rejoinder of 'Geordie hinny'[2] and the amusement of the other passengers not only demonstrated this knowledge but also introduced me to the delights of a responsive audience. I suppose I continued to listen to and sing local songs ever since, at school, on records, and from the 1970s in folk clubs, but it had not occurred to me that such material might be studied academically, and, I must confess, my ignorance of the sources of the songs was almost complete. In 2006 I attended a lecture given by Vic Gammon on broadside ballads, and I recognized the possibility of exploring more formally the songs which I enjoyed. This project is the result.

1.2 The purpose of the research is to examine a range of songs which were current *circa* 1790-1850 to discover how women in particular were portrayed in that material. It may prove possible to see changes in that representation during the course of the period, and comparisons between songs will be made on that basis. Consideration will be given to how far the portrayal of women in the songs reflects that found in other contemporaneous texts.

The dissertation begins with some definitions and parameters for the study. This is followed by a description of the format of the rest of the work, the body of the dissertation, and finally some reflections and conclusions. Throughout, extracts from songs will be used in elucidation, with dates of authorship or publication as far as possible.

Period

[1] Frank Manders, *A History of Gateshead*, (Gateshead: Gateshead Corporation, 1980), 108
[2] 'Keep yor feet still, Geordey hinny' by Joe Wilson, in Joe Wilson's Tyneside Songs, Ballads, and Drolleries, published between 1864 and 1869, available on Gateshead Council, 'FARNE Archive Search', *FARNE Folk Archive North East*, 2003, http://www.asaplive.com/archive/detail.asp?id=N3808902 (20.4.09)

1.3 The period covered by the research is probably the easiest starting-point. Vicinus describes 1780-1830 as the 'years of greatest economic and social change'[3]. During this time, the experience of all women and men in England was profoundly changed by two hugely significant interrelated features: the developments which became known as the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the wars with France. At the same time, there were ongoing changes in society linked to the Enlightenment which had been gathering pace for decades. These changes were reflected to varying degrees in the songs which are examined in this study, although the emphasis of my work will be on those which have some specific reference to the women of the North East of England. In order to set the songs in context, I will give a brief outline of the events of the period in question.

1.4 'The Enlightenment' of (in particular) eighteenth century England, Scotland, and France was an intellectual movement which influenced society's view of men and women. It had an effect on what was considered appropriate and therefore respectable in relation to a wide range of aspects of people's lives, from sexual identity to appearance and manners. The Enlightenment was the birth of an ideology which saw human nature progress from 'the ignorant tradition of the Middle Ages'[4], with its superstitious churches and heirarchy of status determined by birth, to a position where society was managed rationally, with civilization in control of nature and wealth created by educated individuals. The search for what was 'natural' and therefore rational was important to those developing the ideas of enlightenment, and their conclusions had far-reaching consequences for women of the era and beyond (for example, see the discussion in paragraph 4.6).

1.5 In 1789, England was largely rural, but throughout the eighteenth century, developments in machinery and production methods meant that the point was being reached at which production would no longer depend on simple human labour. Allied with such change was the fact that private profit and economic development had become accepted as the 'supreme objectives of government policy'[5]. Improvements in machinery meant that agriculture in England would be able to increase productivity to feed an increasingly non-agricultural population, and land enclosures would soon provide surplus labour for new industries. The stage was set for what became known as 'The Industrial

[3] Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 5
[4] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (London : Abacus, 2003), 34
[5] Hobsbawm, *Revolution*, 46

Revolution', which Hobsbawm describes as a success for the country's economy, and a tragedy for human beings.[6]

1.6 The population of England – and particularly the urban population – increased significantly in the early nineteenth century, from 10.5 million in 1801 to 18.1 million in 1841.[7] Between 1801 and 1851, Newcastle's population grew from 28,000 to 87,000[8]. Nationally, some of this urbanisation was a result of the wholesale enclosure of common land between 1760 and 1832, forcing many families into towns to find work in the newly-developing factories, combined with the prospect of higher wages and increased job security. These population shifts had extensive repercussions for the provision of housing, health, and education in towns and cities, as well as an obvious impact on the pattern of people's lives.

1.7 From 1792 to 1815, there was almost uninterrupted war in Europe, and England was at war with France for much of that time. France was a threat in two ways. Firstly, there was a real possibility of military invasion throughout the period, and especially between 1803 and 1805, with some 80,000 French troops within a few days march of the Channel ports[9], although 'The French Invasion'[10] is a North East song dated rather earlier - 10th May 1794 - and was produced in response to a rumour of invasion at Bambrough *(sic)*, on the coast of Northumberland. Secondly, the Revolution demonstrated the potential power of the citizenry, and this was very threatening to the ruling classes of England. The early days of the French Revolution had attracted enthusiastic interest in England from radicals and writers such as Wordsworth, but from 1793, there was a feeling that the revolutionaries had gone too far; support dwindled and 'anti-gallican' sentiment grew. Nevertheless, the very fact that it had proved possible was disturbing to those in authority. There are several songs in North East collections attacking or mocking the French, or boasting of the local response to the enemy, such as 'Britannia's Volunteers', 'The

[6] Hobsbawm, *Revolution*, 65
[7] E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class.* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1979), 215
[8] Stephen Harbottle, *The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (Newcastle: Northern University Press, 1997), 5
[9] Mark Philp (ed), *Resisting Napoleon*:*The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815.* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 1
[10] John Bell (ed), *Rhymes of Northern Bards,* (Newcastle: John Bell, 1812. This facsimile edition Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1971), 81

Pitman's Revenge Against Buonaparte', and 'The Durham Volunteers' (dated February 1805).[11]

1.8 After Waterloo, the English economy was in considerable difficulty, and Tyneside's experience was no exception. Mackenzie records that,

> The bad harvest in 1799 and the effects of the war combined to produce such a dearth that wheat in the Newcastle market sold at one guinea a Winchester bushel. On January 4th 1800 a public meeting was held in the Guildhall, Newcastle for the purpose of establishing a public soup-kitchen for the relief of the poor ...[12]

However, life was not universally bleak, as Colls summarises:

> The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars with France had two relevant effects on North East society. Firstly, from 1791 – 1815 the region had a major cycle of capital investment which was led by the coal trade with reverberations throughout the local economy... Secondly, the keelmen and seamen of Tyne and Wear as well as being important to the 'home effort' for coal, were also important to the 'war effort' in manning the ships of the Royal Navy.[13]

Thus the years from 1790 to 1850 seem likely to yield rewards of interest from whatever perspective they are studied, simply because of the huge changes and important events which were taking place in social, political, and military life. Paragraph 1.12 will also show that the period was of particular interest in the development of the cultural experience of the people in the North East of England.

[11] Bell, *Rhymes* 15 (Roud B130236), 37 (Roud 9025), and 290 respectively.
[12] Eneas Mackenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne, including Gateshead* (Newcastle: Mackenzie & Dent, 1827), 74
[13] Robert Colls, *The Collier's Rant: Song and Culture in the Industrial Village* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 24

North East

1.9 What is 'the North East', and why are this region's songs worthy of study? Here, I must confess to my bias as someone who is proud to be a native of the area, although I hope that awareness of this prejudice will help me to endeavour to examine the material critically. The borders of the geographical area which might comprise the north-east of England have varied over the centuries, although as Colls & Lancaster comment, '... those outside the North East rarely differentiate between the inhabitants of the three riversides'[14] (ie Tyne, Wear, and Tees). Bell's *Rhymes of Northern Bards*[15], arguably the most significant collection of North East songs, has a frontispiece which describes it as 'being a curious collection of old and new songs and poems, peculiar to the Counties of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland, and Durham'. Bell also includes a short verse 'sent to the editor and printer' which wishes success to the 'friends of Tyne', and encourages everyone to recognize Newcastle as the 'Emporium of the North', suggesting that Tyneside may be especially favoured in the editor's eyes. The following page records verses praising the songs and tunes of Northumberland. Bell also includes several items collected by the Stockton lawyer Joseph Ritson and relating to his own area. When the songs were first published, Stockton was in County Durham, but is now part of the county of Cleveland. Bell therefore shows a commitment to recording material from the whole area which now comprises Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, and County Durham, as do other collectors and publishers. I intend to do the same, and will examine material which was available in this region in the period in question. I will, however, exclude what are known as 'Border ballads' because this is a distinctive genre attracting extensive separate study, and are generally of an earlier origin than the songs I will discuss.

1.10 North East England is the area furthest away from the centre of national government in London, and in the period covered by this study, its main industry of coal-mining and the associated coal trade set it apart even further from the rest of the country because of the uncommon nature of its activities. The culture of the North East, perhaps inevitably therefore, includes elements of independence and cynicism about the capital which were expressed to varying degrees at different times. A song which reflects at least Newcastle's

[14] Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster (eds), *Geordies: Roots of Regionalism* (Newcastle: Northumbria University Press, 2005), ix

[15] Bell, *Rhymes*, unnumbered pages

attitude to the capital is 'Canny Newcassel'[16], in which the disillusioned writer describes a disappointing visit to London. None of the much-vaunted sights were as good as anything Newcastle had to offer, although catching sight of the king was thrilling, and the writer was prompted to pray that he would be kept safe from Bonaparte. The writer of 'Newcastle bangs the world'[17] leaves the listener in no doubt even from the song's title where his sympathies lay!

1.11 The titles of these two songs introduce another aspect of this project: the use of local dialect in the material. Paragraph 2.6 comments on the way in which different songwriters use dialect, but at this point, I shall simply record that I will include a translation of local words and constructions where appropriate. On the whole, the context in which the words were used suggests that their nineteenth century meaning was largely the same as their use by twenty-first century Geordies. The translations I offer will appear in italics after or alongside the dialect words.

The second song mentioned above is quite easily translated. 'Bangs' means 'beats', both in the sense of being better than, and with reference to a physical beating, as used in 'Bang her well, Peter'[18] (although this usage is not confined to the North East). 'Canny Newcassel', however, presents something of a problem, because 'canny' is one of those words which 'natives' understand very well, but find very difficult to explain! The glossary provided in Robson's *Songs of the Bards* translates 'canny' as 'gentle'[19]. 'Gentle Newcastle' seems inappropriate within the context of the song, although 'canny' might sometimes mean that. 'Dear', or even 'Good Old' Newcastle might be a more accurate title for that song, but perhaps it is enough to say that 'canny' is generally a term of approval, with the exact meaning to be determined by the context.

1.12 Smith states that 'By the eighteenth century, Newcastle exerted all the influence of a regional capital ...'[20], and Vicinus[21] notes that 'Newcastle was one the liveliest and most

[16] Bell, *Rhymes*, 314; Roud 3060. Song by Thomas Thompson, who died in 1816. *Rhymes* was published in 1812, and this, along with the reference to Bonaparte, suggests the song might have been quite new when it appeared in Bell's collection.
[17] *Untitled chapbook* (Royal Arcade, Newcastle: W R Walker, n d), 5 (Roud B47883)
[18] Bodleian, Harding B 25(135); published by Pollock, North Shields.
[19] Joseph Philip Robson (ed), *Songs of the Bards of the Tyne, or a choice collection of Original Songs chiefly in the Newcastle dialect with a glossary of 800 words* (Newcastle: P France, 1849), 547
[20] Jeff Smith, 'The making of a diocese', in Colls & Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 2001), 97

prosperous towns of the early nineteenth century'. This is not only a modern observation, however, as Mackenzie believed in 1827 that 'Newcastle upon Tyne is sometimes emphatically styled the Metropolis of the North.'[22] Colls & Lancaster note that Newcastle's status as the regional capital arose and remains because of the lack of rivals for the position; Newcastle has historically been allowed to 'impose its cultural imperialism upon the region'.[23] As well as this general character of local importance, Newcastle was, along with Gateshead, a particularly good place to publish songs. O'Connell describes the North East generally as 'one of the leading provincial publishing centres of the late eighteenth century, and standards were high'[24], while Harker's view is that 'For anyone who wanted to publish a large collection of verse, Newcastle was an ideal place in the early nineteenth century.'[25] In his introduction to Allan's song collection, Harker also comments that Newcastle had been a centre of 'organized cultural activity'[26] for many years prior to that, with travelling theatre, musicians, and local songs.

1.13 Edward Chicken, who wrote 'The Collier's Wedding', was born in Newcastle in 1698[27], and the poem was first published in 1720.[28] There were others writing popular songs in the North East around the same time (John Cunningham and Thomas Whittle, for example), but 'The Collier's Wedding' was different because it used Tyneside dialect, probably for the first time in such material. It was also about people who lived and worked in Newcastle. Fordyce refers to 'Newcastle songs' when providing an obituary of songwriter William Mitford in 1851[29]. Allan describes Thomas Thompson (born in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, in 1773) as 'one of the founders of Tyneside song.'[30] By 1862, Allan was able to publish a 16-page 'songster' called 'Tyneside Songs'[31], and so there is evidence of such material from the early eighteenth century, and a designation as a

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[21] Vicinus, *Industrial Muse*, 33
[22] Mackenzie, *Newcastle*, 157
[23] Colls & Lancaster, *Geordies*, 57
[24] Sheila O'Connell, *The English Popular Print* (London: British Museum Press, 1999), 62
[25] Dave Harker in Introduction to Bell, *Rhymes*, xxxvi
[26] Dave Harker (ed) *Allan's Illustrated Edition of Tyneside Songs* (Newcastle: Thomas & George Allan, 1891; this facsimile edition: Frank Graham 1972), x
[27] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 5
[28] Colls, *Collier's Rant*, 58
[29] T Fordyce, *Local Records: or, Historical Register of Remarkable Events, which have occurred in Northumberland and Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Berwick-upon-Tweed, with Biographical Notices of deceased persons of talent, eccentricity, and longevity* (Newcastle: T Fordyce, 1867), 265
[30] Thomas Allan, *Allan's Illustrated Edition of Tyneside Songs* (Newcastle: Thomas & George Allan, 1891; this facsimile edition: Frank Graham 1972), 34
[31] Harker, in Allan, *Tyneside* Songs, xix

specific genre from the mid-nineteenth. Throughout England there are songs which are from specific counties, but the relatively small geographical area of Tyneside has produced a large and distinctive collection of songs which seems to be unique. Robson attempts to explain the songs' popularity in the introduction to his 1849 reprinting of *Songs of the Bards of the Tyne*. He says they are,

> ... held in higher estimation by the dwellers on the banks of the coaly Tyne than the finest compositions of Aristoto *[sic]*, Theocritus, or Racine, for this especial and cogent reason that they are part and parcel of the Northumbrians themselves.[32]

Songs

1.14 Bell describes his *Rhymes* as comprising songs and poems, and the same may be said of other collections, whether earlier than Bell, or as recent as Harker's 1999 volume of *Songs and Verse of the North East Pitmen c1780-1844*.[33] Although the title of my dissertation refers to 'songs', I am not convinced that it would be helpful to spend a significant amount of time differentiating between songs and poems. Some of the verses I will consider here are well-known as songs, and their performance as such is documented; many continue to be sung. Some of the material I have examined is poetry which appeared in periodicals which may have been read out in a social situation as a shared experience, or declaimed at a public event, but not performed as songs. For example, the Chartist newspaper, *Northern Liberator,* printed on 2nd February 1839 what was described as a 'song' by the Radical poet Ebenezer Elliott, but there is no suggestion of a tune, or, indeed, that it was intended to be performed to music.[34] With other items it is not possible to say how they were used. Very few of the verses included in the collections have a recommended tune, even when they were known to have been performed as songs. Equally, the poems with a regular metre and recognizable form could easily have been sung. Indeed, some (particularly some of those in Harker's collection of pitmen's verses) were clearly based on the format and style of hymns. My interest is in finding out how the women of the time were portrayed in 'popular' (and that meaning is to be explored)

[32] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, v
[33] Dave Harker, (ed), *Songs and Verse of the North-East Pitmen c1780-1844*, (Gateshead: Athenæum Press Ltd, 1999)
[34] *Northern Liberator*, 2.2.1839

material which would have been available in some way or other to a variety of social groups. Whether this involved singing, reading, or speaking would have had an influence on who might have heard the verses, and this will be considered when analysing the material, but for simplicity, I will refer to the works as 'songs', unless there is a specific reason to describe them otherwise.

Popular

1.15 A good deal of work has been done to try to establish an appropriate way of describing songs which are neither 'art' or 'classical', nor commercially-composed and widely available – the equivalent of what might be found in today's 'charts'[35]. 'Folk songs', though a term in common everyday use, now seems to lack credibility in the academic arena thanks to the re-evaluation of the work which Cecil Sharp and others undertook in the first folk revival.[36] Pickering notes that '... "traditional song" is also preferable to "folksong" as a descriptive term'.[37] 'Traditional' presents problems too, however, despite Williams's useful reminder that tradition involves a process of handing down[38], which is what Bell hoped to do by creating 'a repository to give them a chance of living a day beyond the time they were written'[39]. The term 'traditional song' may prompt the enquiry, 'Whose tradition?', and the validity of the answer may then be questioned. 'Vernacular song' has found favour with some. Pickering saw it in 1988 '... more as a holding operation than, as yet, a fully conceptualised element of the scholarly apparatus.'[40] However, the term – and the concept – seems to be holding up, as Gammon notes in 2006,

> I use the term 'vernacular' to imply popular usage and appropriation – art music can become vernacular music if performed according to popular stylistic norms.[41]

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[35] I recognize that this description also raises questions to which this current project will provide no answers, and move swiftly on to 'folk songs'.

[36] For example, Dave Harker, *One for the Money: Politics & popular song* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 147, R P Elbourne, 'The Question of Definition'. *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol 7 (1975) 9-29, passim, Michael Pickering, 'The study of vernacular song in England.' *Jahrbuch fur Volksliedforschung*, vol. 33 (1988), 95-104, 96 Colls, *Collier's Rant*, 18

[37] Pickering, ibid., 97

[38] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 315

[39] Harker, in Bell *Rhymes*, xliv

[40] Pickering, ibid., 97

[41] Vic Gammon, 'Problems in the Performance and Historiography of English Popular Church Music', *Radical Musicology* Volume 1 (2006), 1

He also comments on the idea that vernacular song is the 'everyday and the local, as opposed to the elite, national and international ...'[42]. I find this helpful and appealing, and perhaps if I were starting this project now, with the information I have acquired since defining the scope of my work, the title might have referred to 'North East vernacular' rather than 'popular' song! However, this would still require consideration of the use of 'popular', even as a discarded option, and so I turn to Williams's description. He reviews the development of the word 'popular' from its original meaning in law and politics as 'belonging to the people'[43] through its use as a derogatory term implying currying favour to meaning 'widespread' from the seventeenth century, and 'widely favoured' (late eighteenth century) and 'well-liked' in the nineteenth.[44] The idea of 'popular' cultural elements coming 'from the people' is examined by many writers, including, for example, Harker[45], and Golby & Purdue, who note that, '... the largely urban popular culture that had emerged by the mid-[18th] century was to a considerable degree a culture created by the people themselves'.[46] This, of course, begs the question of who 'the people' are, and, in relation to this project, could include the wide range of human beings of all classes who wrote songs available to those living in the North East, although there are some who would accept only a much narrower field. However, this is well-trodden ground, and far beyond the scope of this project to develop, and instead I turn to my own definition for use in this research.

1.16 O'Connell offers a quotation of Paulson's:

> 'Popular' is ... 'read or seen [*and I would add, 'or heard'*] by almost everybody; [and therefore] part of the consciousness of the learned or educated as well as the uneducated ...'[47]

[42] Vic Gammon, *Desire, Drink and Death in English Folk and Vernacular Song, 1600-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 2-3
[43] Williams, *Keywords*, 236
[44] Ibid 237
[45] Harker, *One for the Money*, 24, among several
[46] J M Golby & A W Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900* (Stroud, Glos: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1999), 11
[47] R Paulson in O'Connell, *Popular Print*, 14

In the context of this project, I have come to think of 'popular songs' as being 'potentially accessible or available'. The same song might be, for example, printed on a broadside, included in a chapbook, sung in the street by a ballad singer, pasted on the wall of an inn, performed in a music hall or a friendly society meeting, or read out loud in a social gathering. The format in which a song might be available could affect its popularity, or, conversely, its popularity could be affected by the format. Joseph Ritson's *Bishopric Garland* was first published in Stockton in 1784, then reprinted in Newcastle in 1792, and in London in 1809[48]. Four hundred copies of Bell's *Northern Rhymes* were printed in August 1812, at six shillings each, and sold out quickly[49]. The introduction to *The Bishoprick Garland* records that Bell's 'amusing volume'[50] was out of print in 1834. It was clearly popular, but only to those who could afford to buy the book. The publisher's preface to the reprint of *Songs of the Bards of the Tyne* comments that, '... our object at the outset of our speculation, was to print and publish a CHEAP BOOK – a book that the poorest working man might purchase ...'[51]. However, many of the songs included in these collections would have appeared in other formats such as broadsides, or been performed in public and thus been available – and potentially popular – to a wider range of people.

While the popularity of printed material might be restricted by its price, at least in the form of books, Vicinus points out that the accessibility of broadsides was not restricted by purchasers' inability to read. It would be possible to find someone to read them on behalf of the buyer, and she also believes that broadsides 'were among the many social pressures that encouraged people to learn to read'.[52] While broadsides might popularize songs, the life of songs which were already popular could be extended by printing in other formats. Marshall seems to have been especially astute in maximizing the business potential of this. In his wide range of songbooks, he included material which had been performed at Newcastle's Theatre Royal, and even published collections relating to

[48] Sir Cuthbert Sharpe, (ed) *The Bishoprick Garland, or a Collection of Legends, Songs, Ballads, etc Belonging to the County of Durham* (London: Nichols, Baldwin, & Cradock, 1834), vi
[49] Harker in Bell, *Rhymes*, xliii
[50] Sharpe, *Bishoprick Garland*, vi
[51] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, unnumbered page
[52] Vicinus, *Industrial Muse*, 26

theatre performances. His '*Thespian Songster*'[53] was one, while there was a special edition commemorating a musical festival at the theatre in October 1824.[54] The Theatre Royal was so popular that a song (reprinted by several publishers) describes the patrons as being like animals[55], but it is interesting that the audience was quite varied:

The boxes too were fill'd se fine,
With all the labouring sons of Tyne,
And servant lasses, all divine,
Did beautify the Theatre.[56]

1.17 This aspect of 'popularity', however, points to another difficulty in determining which songs should be studied in this project. Hundreds of songs which might describe or comment on some element of women's lives were 'potentially accessible or available' to the population of the North East between 1790 and 1850. Many of them could be designated as 'local' songs, being either written in dialect, recording events in the area, or produced by people born or resident in the region. However, it is clear from the material which was reprinted sometimes several times that songs from other sources were widely appreciated. Scottish songs seemed to be especially popular, perhaps influenced by the presence in the early years of the nineteenth century of 'hundreds of Scotsmen and borderers'[57] in the parish of All Saints. Harker records that a collection of songs performed by 'John Wilson ... the Scottish vocalist ... [was] published by Robert White in 1849'[58], and there was a Burns Club in Newcastle long after the poet died in 1796. Marshall published a 'Burns's Songster', entirely devoted to the works of Robert Burns, and printed 'Bruce's Address to his Army at the Battle of Bannockburn' for 1d. While Marshall almost invariably reports that the songs he published from the Theatre

[53] *The Thespian Songster, being a choice collection of celebrated songs, some of them sung at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle by Mers [sic] Braham, Grimaldi, Newton, Lancaster, and Miss Byrne, etc* (Newcastle: J Marshall, n d)
[54] *Songs from a grand musical festival at the Theatre Royal October 5, 6, 8 1824* (Newcastle: John Marshall, n d)
[55] 'Newcastle Theatre in an uproar' in T Thompson, J Shield, W Midford, H Robson and others, ed John Marshall *A Collection of Songs, Comic, Satirical, and Descriptive, Chiefly in the Newcastle Dialect and Illustrative of the Language and manners of the Common People on the Banks of the Tyne and Neighbourhood* (Newcastle: Marshall, 1827), i
[56] Ibid., 175
[57] Harker in Bell, *Rhymes*, xxxiii
[58] Dave Harker & Frank Rutherford, (eds) *Songs From the Manuscript Collection of John Bell*, (Leamington Spa: James Hall Ltd, 1985), 267

Royal which he published were received with rapturous applause, he is even more effusive about the performance of 'Scots wha hae':

> As sung by Mr Braham, at the Theatre-Royal Newcastle, on several successive evenings during his Engagement, in July, 1818, with the most rapturous applause. Sung, on most of the evenings, three times; and on the Evening of his benefit, when the house was crowded in all parts, he was obliged to sing it four times, before he could satisfy the Audience.[59]

1.18 In his several collections, Marshall also published songs widely known elsewhere in England, including 'traditional' ones like 'Dame Durden' and 'The Mermaid',[60] alongside the works of known authors like Henry Carey and Thomas Moore, who wrote 'Sally in our alley'[61] and 'The last rose of summer'[62] respectively. It would be possible to undertake a statistical analysis to determine which songs were reprinted most often, and this might provide some indication of 'popularity', but such an approach would inevitably be inaccurate because it is not known how much material is no longer available. Additionally, it would be impossible to assess the recurrence of songs appearing in the other formats noted in paragraph 1.16. Having therefore explored to some extent the possible meanings of 'popular', and writing the introduction to this dissertation after examining a large number of songs, I have decided to write about songs available to people in the North East in the period 1790 to 1850 which seem to me to address the issues under consideration, and which I have found interesting and appealing. This is clearly not a scientific approach, and many - perhaps most - of the relevant songs which were published then will not even be mentioned, but this is inevitable even in a work more detailed than mine. I accept that, in consequence, my analysis may not be capable of generalization, and the songs selected will not tell the whole story, although what they reveal will, as far as possible, be supported by other evidence. Nevertheless, I

[59] Bodleian Firth b.25(549) Roud 124
[60] *The Starling, a new song book, being a collection of the most popular new songs* (Newcastle: J Marshall, n d), 6, 8
[61] *The Skylark: a new song book, being a choice collection of 28 celebrated new songs* (Newcastle: J Marshall n d), 16; Roud 19807
[62] *The Bullfinch, a new song book containing celebrated popular songs* (Newcastle: J Marshall n d), 11; Roud 13861

believe this to be a worthwhile insight into the lives of some of the women of the period, and may uncover the potential for further investigation.

Accessibility and availability

1.19 The availability and accessibility of the songs is important because of the potential for influence on how the subjects of the material are viewed, and this is particularly relevant for my work in examining the representation of the lives of women. Songs may offer judgements about their subjects, or new ways of thinking about their themes. They can confirm stereotypes or portray challenges to conventional behaviour. In commenting on the way in which a 'folk song' could develop, Lloyd suggests that a song which might have a continuing life might 'be an apt statement of a common emotional experience and may correspond nicely to the climate of the time'.[63] This is especially significant in the North East, where the sense of regional identity is important. Perhaps this strong sense of identity is a major reason for the very existence of 'Tyneside songs'. Perhaps the songs themselves contribute to the regional identity, as Colls suggests in commenting on Johnny Handle's 1958 song, 'The Collier Lad'[64]: '... many is the Geordie who, if not exactly a 'collier lad', has felt a common identity, perhaps pride, on coming from such a swashbuckling heritage.'[65]

1.20 The issue of the potential influence of popular songs also matters because it is concerned with class. Vicinus observes that working class writers themselves believed that literature could influence people, hence the importance of periodicals like *The Miners' Advocate*. However, she also notes the 'overwhelming condescension'[66] towards the literature of working people emanating from those who make their judgements from a position of educational superiority. This perception of contempt for working people is echoed frequently in Harker's writing, for example in his introduction to the reprint of Allan's Tyneside Songs, in which he comments on the work of 'small tradesmen and skilled journeymen' like Robert Gilchrist and Robert Emery, whose 'own supposed cultural superiority is plainly visible in the way that ordinary working people appear in songs only as vulgar caricatures ...'[67].

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[63] A L Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1967), 72
[64] Johnny Handle, 'The Collier Lad', *The Collier Lad*, Axis Audio, n d
[65] Colls, *Collier's Rant*, 15
[66] Vicinus, *Industrial Muse*, 1
[67] Harker, in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, ix

Walton observes that,

> Contempt as a social attitude, as opposed to a philosophical disposition, arose within British society in the later eighteenth century, during the period of the first great expansion of entrepreneurial dynamism among the rising bourgeoisie.[68]

He records that, as wealth spread to the middle classes, those who were becoming more prosperous felt less of a need to look upwards to their 'betters', and he also quotes Harriet Pigott, a single woman of modest means, who travelled extensively in Britain and Europe. Drawing attention to the contrasting attitudes she perceived in Britain and Europe, she declared in 1818,

> In Britain, by contrast, where there was much more fluidity between economic groups in society, there was a greater need to fence off one's own social status by insisting on distance from those on the lower rungs.[69]

Harker notes how J P Robson could, from his position as a schoolmaster, 'look with contempt on the hand-to-mouth existence'[70] of the characters in his 1849 song, 'The Paanshop in a Bleeze *(on fire)*...'. He does, however, point out, that Robson also had pieces published in *The Miners' Advocate* in 1844, 'vaguely in sympathy with the pacifist tactics which eventually lost the struggle...'[71]. Marshall, in the preface to his 1827 song collection, writes in his Editor's Address:

> Our Keelmen and Pitmen have generally been the common subjects of satire for local Poets; but, in attempting to describe the characters of those useful bodies of men, the Poets appear often to have claimed their privilege, and given, instead of faithful portraits,

[68] Stuart Walton, *Humanity: An Emotional History* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), 215
[69] Ibid., 310
[70] Harker in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, xv
[71] Dave Harker, 'The Making of the Tyneside Concert Hall.' *Popular Music*, Vol 1 (1981), 27-56, 45

only rude caricatures; - delineations not characteristic
of the Keelmen and Pitmen of the present day.[72]

Sadly, Marshall went on to describe the keelmen as hardy and independent, and the pitmen as servile, and Harker believes that helped '... to set all the organised militant keelmen against their pit-village cousins.'[73] It was not until the rise of Ned Corvan (and then George Ridley and Joe Wilson) from the mid-century onwards that there was a significant repetory of songs about working people written and performed by those from the same background.

Texts and editing

1.21 Many of the songs I have chosen to examine in this work have been published in several sources. Because I am not undertaking a detailed analysis of how many times songs were reprinted, or which publishers selected which songs, I have chosen not to comment in detail on the editorial choice of material, although occasionally it will be appropriate to note where and when a song has appeared. In general, there is little difference in the texts of the various versions under consideration here, although in a very small number of songs, there are changes which seem to me to be significant, and these are described where they occur (in paragraphs 5.2-5.4, for example).

Women

1.22 Not only am I a native of Tyneside - a Geordie - but I am a Geordie woman, fascinated by the ways in which women's experience seems so much the same now as it was in the period covered by this research, despite the many changes in society and legislation over the centuries. As well as my personal interest, I want to undertake this research because there appears to have been relatively little work done on the lives of women in the North East. Knox comments that local history has been perceived through men's work, and notes that 'There have been more words written on the geological formation of the Northern coalfield, than on women's part in regional life.'[74] As far as the local songs are concerned, while there are a few written by women, the vast majority have male authors, and so the record in song of women's experience was made by men, with a

[72] Thompson, Shield, Midford, Robson and others, *A Collection of Songs*, i
[73] Harker in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, xiii
[74] Elaine Knox, ' 'Keep your feet still, Geordie hinny'. Women and work on Tyneside' in Colls & Lancaster (eds), *Geordies*, 95

masculine view of what was appropriate and permissible. Through this project, I hope to make a small contribution to uncovering something of the lives of North East women in the early nineteenth century.

1.23 There are some facets of the way in which North East songs represent women which are very familiar, and which seem to echo female experience in the 21st century. While this is interesting (and, indeed, sometimes shocking), it is important that I avoid the temptation to assume that, because things look the same, they are the same. To help me with this, I have used the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, writing in 1792, to create a model for grouping and then analysing the songs. Wollstonecraft's major work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*[75], is, in some respects, not a completely appropriate vehicle for this, as she declares that she is only concerned with middle-class women. Although the audience for many North East songs may have been the middle classes[76], the majority of the songs (and particularly those which are still being sung and recorded today) are about the experience of working-class people. Nevertheless, even if she did not intend it, the themes arising in Wollstonecraft's work are also reflected in the lives of poor women, as the songs to which I will refer demonstrate. I have used six of the themes from *A Vindication* as signposts for the subject-matter of relevant songs:

- The characteristics of acceptable female behaviour;
- The necessity for marriage;
- The risk and ease of seduction;
- Earning a living;
- Domestic responsibilities;
- Civic activity.

Each theme is introduced with some of Wollstonecraft's words and illustrated with extracts from songs and other material.

[75] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (London: Penguin Books, 1992)
[76] Harker in Bell, *Rhymes*, xxxviii - xlv

Chapter 2

2. The ideal woman

'Gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are ... consistently recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex ...'[77]

2.1 Wollstonecraft identifies here an essential characteristic for a respectable woman of her time, and one which became increasingly important over the nineteenth century. However, while she rails against this construct of femininity, there were others who wrote extensively to encourage women to develop such a persona. Hannah More and Jane West wrote in support of 'separate spheres' and passivity in women, and their work was widely published. More, an evangelical Christian, produced numerous popular works, in particular her series of Cheap Repository Tracts, and a novel, *Coelebs in search of a wife*. The former 'warned against idleness, gambling, drink, and striving to better oneself socially, and preached the virtues of thrift, industriousness, and humility',[78] while the latter's 'didactive narrative is comprised of interpolated tales and descriptions of positive or negative exemplary women and marriages.'[79] West, in her three-volumes of 'Letters to a Young Lady' in 1806, declared that boys and girls required separate education because girls had to be 'docile, contented, prudent, and domestic'.[80]

2.2 In the North East, as elsewhere, many of the songs of the period represented women in a way which reflects this ideal, and there is a wide range of approaches to the theme and in the quality of writing. Some songs are simply poor pieces of work: uninspired writing copied from popular styles. A number of the songs selected by Bell, Marshall, and others provide examples of such. 'Nanny of the Tyne' and 'Mary of the Tyne' are similar[81]. There is no use of dialect, and the songs' bards, nymphs, and swains might be found in the pastoral tradition of poetry of earlier centuries. 'The Tyne' is irrelevant. 'Nanny', however, proved popular, and was included in several Tyneside collections, published by Walker,

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[77] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 118
[78] Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A social history* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), 228
[79] Lisa Wood, 'Bachelors and "Old Maids": Antirevolutionary British Women Writers and Narrative Authority after the French Revolution', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* Vol 22 No 1, Spring 2003, 81-98, 87
[80] Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998), 94
[81] Bell, *Rhymes*, 60 (Roud B130287) & 88 (Roud 9027)

three times by Marshall, Oliver (1824), and France (1849), as well as in Bell's 1812 *Rhymes*. Nanny embodies the qualities which Wollstonecraft identifies as being required by respectable society:

Far from the noise of giddy courts
The lovely charmer dwells;
Her cot the haunt of harmless sports,
In virtue she excells.
With modesty, good nature join'd,
To form the nymph divine;
And truth, with innocence combin'd,
In Nanny of the Tyne.[82]

'Lucy Gray of Allendale', a nymph fairer than any flower, includes the additional romantic and popular element of death[83]. 'The Lass of Cockerton' appeared first in Ritson's *Bishopric Garland* of 1784[84] and in Bell's 1812 collection[85], but unlike 'Nanny', does not seem to have had any currency later in the century. The song is as sentimental as the others, describing a graceful, modest pastoral milkmaid, but the language is less self-conscious, and perhaps the specific location near Darlington in County Durham, rather than the vague 'Tyne' influenced the song's popularity. It may be that Bell was well aware of the inadequacies of some of these songs, while equally aware of their attraction to potential customers. For example, 'The Newcastle Beauties', identified only by initials, are hymned in 17th century style, and Bell declares 'These beauties must be now of some age, as they are unknown to the editor'[86], but they may still have been familiar to some who might therefore have been sufficiently interested to buy the book. The writer of 'Go All to Coquet and Woo'[87] lists the attractions of Northumberland girls by reference to the nearest river, resulting in some contrived rhymes, but despite the attempt at novelty in the song's construction, the descriptions of the girls are much the same as elsewhere: they are

[82] Bell, *Rhymes*, 60
[83] Bell, *Rhymes*, 211 (Roud 9032)
[84] Joseph Ritson, *The Bishopric Garland; or Durham Minstrel, being a choice collection of excellent songs Relating to the above County full of agreeable variety and pleasant mirth* (Stockton: R Christopher, 1784, enlarged in 1792), 69; Roud 9037
[85] Bell, *Rhymes*, 275
[86] Bell, *Rhymes*, 91. However, the song does end with the injunction to remember that beauty fades and virtue is the more worthy goal.
[87] Bell, Rhymes; 247 Roud 8087

modest, graceful, and witty, judged by their appearance, and occasionally too concerned with fashion.

2.3 The songs so far described do not, in the main, use North East dialect. In contrast, 'The Pitman's Courtship' is written in dialect, but still praises those qualities required of the ideal woman. Its author, William Mitford (sometimes Midford) was born in 1788 in North Shields, and worked as a shoemaker.[88] In 1816, Marshall published a book of eleven songs written by Mitford, including those which Allan believes are his best – 'Cappy, or the pitman's dog', 'XYZ at Newcastle Races, 1814', and 'The Pitman's Courtship'. Allan describes this song as follows:

> The hero's dreams of happiness, homely simplicity, and the happy mingling of the hetrogeneous stock of articles sold in a "huickstery way" (*like a pedlar or travelling hawker)* in the pit villages, can be appreciated by many to whom the majority of Tyneside songs are riddles.[89]

The song records a conversation overheard between 'Lukey and Bessy', as Lukey describes how he saw Bessy at the previous year's 'hoppen' (*fair*) in a new light, although they had been childhood friends. Now they are looking forward to marriage, and Lukey suggests that his sweetheart could set up a shop to sell household goods and sweets. She would be dressed like a lady, and have a 'cuddy' (*horse or ass*) to ride into town. Two 'Blackeys' (*the 'cigar store indians' sometimes known as 'black boys'*) at the shop door would indicate that this high-class establishment sold snuff and tobacco obtained from Newcastle. Lukey closes with a proposal that they should prepare for their wedding the following Whit Sunday.

2.4 'The Pitman's Courtship' is a piece of work rather superior to the likes of 'Nanny / Mary of the Tyne'[90]. Fordyce's obituary for Mitford states that 'His "Pitman's Courtship", for its liveliness and fidelity to nature, may be considered one of the best of Newcastle songs.'[91] It is certainly sentimental, but the hero is attractive – loving, thoughtful, and

[88] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 132
[89] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 135.
[90] Bell, *Rhymes* 60, 88, and Roud 3145, 8085 respectively
[91] Fordyce, *Local Records*, 265

something of a challenger of stereotypes. Conventionally, Lukey recognizes that his sweetheart's shop is needed to provide them with a 'canny bit leevin' (*an acceptable standard of living*)[92], is clearly concerned that they should rise above their present station and appear successful, and Bessy's opinion on his suggestions is not invited. However, however, the young collier is not expecting his wife to be confined to the home, and running a shop would give her a good deal of independence and the opportunity for self-fulfilment. This is in great contrast to the 'hero' of 'The Choice of a Wife', who declares,

> To heighten my affection and double all my joys
> I'd have her often pregnant with little girls and boys
> And out of what "we" have got and what we could allow
> I'd charitable have her and hospitable too.[93]

The appreciation of the song which Allan identified as amongst Mitford's best has been demonstrated by its reprinting by others such as Fordyce[94], Marshall[95], and Robson[96] through to Catcheside-Warrington in 1912 (and in the revised version of 1929)[97]. It was recorded by Michael Hunt in 1967[98].

2.5 However, there was at least one other who did not appreciate Mitford's creation. In his collection of *Songs and Verse of North East Pitmen*, Harker includes a parodied version of 'The Pitman's Courtship'.[99] Harker's note to the song suggests that he mistakes this version for Mitford's original, and his reference to Michael Hunt's recording is incorrect; the song Hunt sings on the LP is Mitford's. Harker records that the parody was published by Pollock, unlike Mitford's version. The parody reveals something more like the reality which would be faced by the young woman in the song, and the contrasts are described in Appendix 1. One of the most striking features of the parody is the description of the large distances Peggy will need to cover to sell enough to make a living. One week Jemmy

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[92] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 144
[93] Harker, *Bell manuscripts*, 231; Roud 8733
[94] *The Newcastle Songster, being a collection of Curious and Interesting Local Songs No 2* (Newcastle: W Fordyce, n d), 3
[95] *The Newcastle Song Book, or Tyneside Songster* (Newcastle: J Marshall, 1842), 21
[96] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, 30
[97] C E Catcheside-Warrington (ed) *Tyneside Songs, Vol II* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: J G Windows, 1929), 16
[98] Michael Hunt, 'The Pitman's Courtship', *Water of Tyne*, Decca [LK4902], 1967
[99] Harker, *NE Pitmen*, 101

plans that she should travel in what is now North Tyneside, then the next she should go as far as Shiney Row, Houghton, and Rainton, some 15 to 20 miles into Wearside.

2.6 Why would an anonymous author wish to parody this song of Mitford's? His equally popular 'Cappy' was re-printed in the same collections as 'The Pitman's Courtship', including the body of work which Harker presents as the songs of the North-east pitmen[100], all versions virtually the same. 'The Pitman's Courtship' seems to have hit a nerve in at least part of the working class community as a sentimental, unrealistic description of a pitman's aspirations for himself and his wife, presented by a 'highly-skilled journeyman'[101] rather than one of their own. Mitford's original was published in booklet form, while the parody, in a broadside[102], may have been more readily available to the pitmen to whom perhaps it was directed.

The notable difference in language between the two versions also gives a clue to the parody's origin and purpose. Mitford's song is very much a 'dialect song', though some versions use slightly broader dialect than others. The parody is very different. There are several local words: the frequently-found 'canny' and 'hinny', for example, along with 'kite' for stomach, 'raws' for rows of pit houses, and 'claggum' for toffee. However, there is none of the 'thou' instead of 'you', 'wi'' for 'with', and 'an''/and, 'lang'/long, or 'aw'/I extensively used by Mitford to give a 'local' flavour. I suspect that some of his language would be incomprehensible to today's Geordies; who would know that a 'huil doo' was 'a pastry made for children at Christmas'[103]? The fact that the parody does not use dialect is a confirmation of Harker's reservations about much of the local language in North East songs. He points out that so many songs which were produced by non-working-class writers were

> ...printed in a sort of 'phonetic' idiom, which was to become standard for petit-bourgeois pieces ... (Real 'Geordie' speakers would not need their language written down: they would read standard spelling aloud in their own idiom without such artificial aids.)[104]

[100] Harker, *NE Pitmen*, 98
[101] Harker in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, xiii
[102] Harker, *NE Pitmen*, 103
[103] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, 547. I think the literal translation would be 'Yule dove'.
[104] Harker, 'Tyneside Concert Hall', 43

Speculation about the reason for the parody may not produce any verifiable answers, but it seems likely to relate to cynicism about the middle classes' understanding of the lives of workers such as miners and keelmen: their lack of appreciation of the difficulty of social mobility, the limited expectations of what their pay would purchase, and the sheer drudgery week by week of making enough money to survive.

2.7 Both the original and the parody have something to say about the women of the time. Mitford's Lukey sees his wife rising above her place as a pit lad's sweetheart; Jemmy's wife faces a round of unremitting toil just to maintain their position. Bessy has a definite date for a wedding with special outfits for both bride and groom, while Peggy is simply to be married without delay. Both young women have sweethearts who appear to care for them, though Lukey is more sentimental about how they met and developed their relationship. It is not completely clear what work the men will undertake after marriage, although it seems possible that Jemmy's plan is to give up pit work. Jemmy is going to 'work like a man'[105] to get Peggy's dress, but she is very much on her own in maximizing her sales. Lukey, on the other hand, will give his sweetheart every help when he comes back from work. There are different understandings of what makes a lady. Bessy's enhanced social standing sees her in muslin and cambric like an ornament in the shop. Peggy will have a new gown, but her capacity for drink is not at all ladylike. More important than the appearance of their clothes, however, is the difference in how they appear in public. Peggy is visible and active not only in her own community but also in several areas of Tyneside and Wearside. Bessy might travel to town on her pony, but there is no question of her undertaking shopkeeping duties anywhere other than behind the counter.

2.8 The idea that women should only appear in public in a restricted range of activities was part of the acting out of the features of conventional womanhood which Wollstonecraft despised. Herzog records that 'Mrs West was alarmed by talk of female independence: "The propriety of our seclusion from public affairs is necessarily interwoven with domestic subjection."'[106], and she was one among many with the same horror of women in public life. Even those who were in agreement that women were the

[105] Harker, *NE Pitmen*, 102
[106] Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds*, 255

equals of men believed that they could not be involved in some fields, such as the law, divinity, medicine, and military activities. Some in Newcastle were more forward-thinking, and the Literary & Philosophical Society, founded in 1793[107], allowed female members from 1804[108]. Chapter 7 will describe how women in the North East took part in political and community activity, and it is clear that some were prepared to defy convention if circumstances required it.

Transgressors

2.9 The deliberate defying of convention, or an unplanned fall from the idealised picture provided by 'Nanny of the Tyne' and her similarly docile sisters creates the potential for public interest, and thus the possibility of the production of a popular song. There are many North East songs about women who do not fulfil the stereotype of gentleness and devotion, and who live out some or all of their potentially socially unacceptable behaviour in public. They get drunk, are sexually adventurous, demand attention, or break the law. Some are 'characters': eccentrics who are caricatured and turned into harmless two-dimensional figures, so to become less of a threat to middle-class complacency. Sometimes the songs openly pass judgement on those who transgress the conventional codes of behaviour, and perhaps rejoice in the subject's downfall, but some simply record the events, or even describe the women with a degree of affection and understanding.

2.10 Steinbach comments that, in contrast with the nineteenth century's supposed reputation for prudery and repression,

> 'In truth, the long nineteenth century was characterized less by a refusal to talk about sex than by an obsessive debate over sex that was distinguished by dire warnings of its dangers, detailed discussions of its effects, and a powerful insistence on the necessity for discretion.'[109]

This was reflected in the songs of the North East as in other aspects of local culture, such as drama or books. There are several songs in the North East canon about sexual

[107] Harbottle, *Turner*, 55
[108] Lit & Phil Home – Independent Library Newcastle (n d) http://www.litandphil.org.uk/html_pages/LP_home.html (20.4.09)
[109] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 106

adventures involving both women and men, and sometimes they include comment on the participants' behaviour, giving an insight into what was not acceptable. One particularly graphic example is 'A curious Description of the City of Sandgate'[110], in which the writer describes the drunken arguments of a husband and wife, the 'mangy Scots ... Like swarms of locusts'[111], and men and women who fall into bed together, heedless of marriage.[112] Another of the criticisms levelled at the women of Sandgate is that, not only do they not attend church, but their 'sides are ne'er to stays confin'd'.[113] The restricted clothing of the time was as much a part of the construct of respectable womanhood as their restricted activities. Other songs record events which one might expect would attract censure, but the writers do not seem to be judgemental. 'The Felton Garland', for example, tells how Jenny Gowan ran away with a brick-maker. They pretended to be married in order to spend 'the nights in pleasure'[114], and then marry officially after Jenny has a miscarriage. Jenny's grandmother is initially critical (see paragraph 4.7), but the writer of the song seems more disapproving of Jenny's pretentious clothes and their mistreatment of a borrowed horse than of their sexual adventures. This reflects that, in 1793 at least, when Ritson's collection was published, '... the betrothal pattern of the seventeenth century still carried on in the nineteenth...', in that pre-marital sex could be acceptable if followed by marriage.[115]

2.11 Some songs outside the 'gentle and docile' stereotype specifically recognize women as sexual beings in their own right. For example, there are three night-visiting songs in Bell's manuscript collection which show three different levels of female involvement in sexual activity. All of these are not unique to the North East, but were available to those in the area during the period covered by the research.

In 'Let Me In This Ae Neet'[116], it is the man who initially asks for admittance, threatening that he will not come back again if refused. The woman takes little persuading, and the song ends amusingly when their activity makes the bed collapse and her mother discovers

[110] Bell, *Rhymes*, 49
[111] Ibid., 51
[112] Ibid., 52
[113] Ibid., 49
[114] Joseph Ritson, *Northumberland Garland, or Newcastle Nightingale: a matchless collection of famous songs*, (Newcastle: Hall & Elliott, 1793), 71-77
[115] Gammon, *Desire, Drink, and Death*, 20
[116] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts* 284; Roud 135

them after all! 'Go From My Window'[117] is the North East version of the classic night-visiting song which is still widely used.[118] While it is the man who seems to be pushing for admittance, the woman is directing the situation, and she does not sound especially emotionally dependent on her lover. Indeed, he seems to be something of an irritant because he cannot pick up the coded messages warning of imminent discovery by the husband. Finally, although it is the man who is mentioned first in the song, the woman in 'Blow the Candle Out'[119] is eager to welcome her apprentice lover. She justifies her actions by commenting that her parents lie embracing each other, so why should not they? She is also confident about making love by candlelight, unembarrassed by a naked lover and herself in her smock.

2.13 Another woman who is confident about claiming a lover's attention invites, 'Laddye lye near me', since she has 'lain alone' for a long time.[120] This is an interesting inclusion in Ritson's collection. Several other versions of this song are written as though the man were the narrator, and are, on the whole, fairly sentimental love songs. Pollock, the North Shields printer, produced a broadside of the male narrator version where there is an implication that the couple could sleep together:

Come press thy lips to mine, Lassie my dearie,
Let they arms round me twine, Lassie lie near me.

Close to my bosom prest, Lassie my dearie;
Sweetly thou'lt sink to rest, Lassie lie near me.[121]

However, the song in Ritson portrays the young woman as very sexually confident, with a degree of longing – or even desperation - uncharacteristic of the rest of the collection. She is not at all deterred by her lover's reticence, and has an answer for all his concerns:

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[117] Ibid., 331; Roud 966; Lloyd records the song as being known as early as the 16th century: *Folk Song*, 187
[118] For example, June Tabor 'Go from my window', *Aleyn*, Topic Records HPO6003 1997, Jane & Amanda Threlfall 'Night Visiting Song', *Morning Tempest*, Beehive Music WBCD001 2000, Eliza Carthy 'Go from my window', *The Definitive Collection*, Topic Records HPO6005 2003
[119] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 290; local version of Roud 368. Roud notes several other versions, all from London-based publishers, one of which specifies that the apprentice comes from the capital.
[120] Joseph Ritson, *North Country Chorister; an unparalled variety of excellent songs, Collected together, for general Amusement by A Bishoprick Ballad Singer* (Durham: L Pennington, 1792), 258.
[121] Bodleian Harding B.25(1075)

If I get thee with bairn, lassy, my deary;
Cannot I nurse the same? Laddy, lye near me.

I'll never marry thee, lassy, my deary,
Do as thou will, said she; laddy, lye near me.

What will thy parents say, lassy, my deary?
Never mind, let us play; laddy, lye near me.[122]

2.14 Sexuality is not necessarily constrained by age, as 'The Frolicsome Old Women of Sunderland'[123] attest. The song is a little obscure, but it seems to celebrate the 70-year-old women of the town who are content to marry at this age, unlike the young women who dither over the decision to wed, and are, in any case, prone to be forsaken by the men of their choice.

The old women carry the day,
They beat both the maids and the men;
To give Sunderland the sway,
For ever and ay,
They'll marry tho' threescore and ten.

This song also points to features found elsewhere. The septuagenarians of Sunderland were able to find husbands, though the men's age is not specified. Old husbands, however, were not always so acceptable. The lady in 'Mount and Go'[124] was married, while young, by her father to an old man with whom she had no sexual relationship. She escapes from her home with all the gold she can carry to join her sailor lover, and lives happily ever after. The old women of Sunderland warn their young contemporaries not to delay their marriages in case they miss the opportunity, and the woman in 'Holiday Gown' runs this risk. The song was written by John Cunningham, who died in 1773, but some of his songs were included in later collections, such as Allan's, and so available to readers or listeners between 1790 and 1850. The narrator of the song almost misses her chance of marriage to the persistent Roger because she feels she is too young for such a step:

[122] Ritson, *Chorister*, Song V
[123] Ritson, *Bishopric Garland* 61; Roud B39175
[124] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts* 341, dated 1845 in this version; Roud 3860

He woos me to marry whenever we meet,
There's honey, sure, dwells on his tongue;
He hugs me so close, and kisses so sweet,
I'd wed – if I were not too young.

She eventually succumbs to Roger's gifts and sweet words, discovering she is old enough to wed after all[125], perhaps encouraged by the recognition that she has a rival for his affections!

2.15 In commenting on the short verse 'On A Young Woman', Harker notes that 'Doubtless this piece was reserved for the delectation of select, men-only audiences, probably at the various convivial societies which lasted into the 1840s.'[126] Similarly, 'The Charms of Jeannie Sutton'[127] would find a similar audience, not only because it depicts a world which was expected to be foreign to respectable women, but also because it contains very graphic descriptions of Jeannie's activities.

This song makes one long to be able to talk to Jeannie Sutton! Is she really the confident sexual athlete who can (literally) turn her hand to a wide range of customer-pleasing activities, or a desperate young woman with no resouces other than the youthful dexterity of her body? The story of Jeannie's life as told in the song is hideous. Born in a workhouse to unmarried parents, she escaped as soon as she reached adolescence. Her many relationships with soldiers produced a child whose father could not be determined (and whose existence is not mentioned as the song proceeds), and she becomes a very active whore. Her end is not described, but the song's first verse suggests that her pre-eminent position led to jealousy and she has fallen into 'dull oblivion's slumber'.[128] Perhaps the most unpleasant aspect of this song is its cheery tone. The male narrator speaks of Jeannie as 'A gallant nymph well worth our praise'[129], and claims, 'Forever shall these walls resound The theme of all her glory'[130], as though recording a military triumph or a classical saga. There is not the smallest recognition of what this sort of life

[125] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 20
[126] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 267. The song is attributed to Burns, and is only 8 lines long, ending with a comment that no-one will wish to 'ride' the 'lass' when she is old and worn out.
[127] Ibid., 161; Roud 8805
[128] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 161
[129] Ibid., 161
[130] Ibid., 163

must have meant for a young woman, and no thought for anything other than the slaking of male desire.

Commenting on the song, Harker notes the difficulty young men experienced in earning enough money to get married and support a family, resulting in later marriage. He suggests that this points to the need for the services of women like Jeannie. Barke observes that 'There was a remarkably close statistical relationship between the annual number of marriages and coal shipments from Newcastle'[131], and between 1796 and 1830 (albeit with reductions in 1800-1801, 1822-3, and 1829), on average, the number of marriages increased. The song does not carry a specific date, but Harker records that it is attributed to Captain Morris, 1745-1846.[132] Bearing in mind the relative prosperity of pitmen and keelmen in the early years of the nineteenth century (see paragraph 1.8), the idea of the deferment of marriage as an excuse for the treatment meted out to Jeannie Sutton rings rather hollow.

Jeannie Sutton apparently plied her trade in a squalid corner, hidden from the Watch. Women like her ran the risk of arrest, and Isabella Smith fell foul of the law in 1805. She was prosecuted for '... publicly and openly committing fornication on a Sunday morning near the parish church of Tynemouth'.[133] Her punishment was solitary confinement in the house of correction at Tynemouth for twelve months. If Jeannie had taken her customers back to her miserable dwelling, she might have been convicted of keeping a disorderly house, like Sarah Watson, who, in consquence, spent a year in prison and one hour each in the pillory at Durham and at Sunderland in 1803.[134]

Local newspapers also reported instances of women being prosecuted for drunkenness. Agnes Watson was given one month's hard labour for creating a disturbance in Sandgate at 5.00pm on a Monday evening.[135] Anne Trotter was involved in an affray with another woman in a house on the Quayside and jumped from two storeys, but escaped with only a broken ankle.[136] A number of songs portray women as independent and pleasing

[131] Mike Barke, 'The People of Newcastle: A Demographic History', in Colls & Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle*, 138
[132] Harker, *Bell manuscripts*, 164
[133] *Newcastle Courant* 27.7.1805
[134] *Newcastle Courant* 8.10.1803
[135] *Northern Liberator* 5.5.1838
[136] *Newcastle Courant* 27.7.1805

themselves in their leisure-time, such as it was, with accounts of drunkenness and riotous behaviour. 'The Sedgfield Frolic'[137] describes a night out enjoyed by a group of women who would probably recognize themselves on Newcastle's Quayside on a Saturday night in 2009. The identity of the narrator of the song seems mainly to be one of the girls, talking about what 'we' did, but the refrain of '... the wanton lasses of Sedgfield Are roaring company' and 'Your praises abroad I will thunder' sound more like comments from an observer. Fifteen women from Acomb, Wall, and Fallowfield in South Northumberland[138] also got through a large amount of liquor, as do 'The Sunderland Lasses' and the lasses and old wives who 'booze' brandy and gin on Tyneside,[139] demonstrating that women from all parts of the North East could be observed to drink a good deal.

2.16 While there were many songs in the North East between 1790 and 1850 which encouraged women to display the characteristics of sweetness and passivity and idealized those who did, this was not the only representation of women available. Some of the songs which portrayed a different view or challenged stereotypes might have had a restricted audience, but others were reprinted often enough to suggest that people wanted to hear them. Perhaps some women and men would have enjoyed a degree of fellow-feeling with those whose activities they pursued themselves. Others may have heard of such adventures with some wistful interest in those who pushed out the boundaries of respectable society. And doubtless there would have been those who derived pleasure and satisfaction from the opportunity to disapprove!

[137] Bell, *Rhymes* 281; Roud B52084
[138] Bell, 'Song' in *Rhymes* 256, 'My Eppie' in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 8; Roud 9003
[139] Both Bell, *Manuscripts*, 130

Chapter 3

3. The choice of marriage?

'... women ... have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties ... To rise in the world ... they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted.'[140]

3.1 Chapter 2 sets out some of the characteristics of the ideal woman of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and the ideal outcome of living up to this stereotype would be marriage to a suitable man. While the wish for a happy marriage, home, and children would not be unexpected, as Wollstonecraft suggests, there were not many alternatives in any case. Several North East songs express women's desire for the conventional outcome. Nunn's song 'The Sandgate Lass on the Ropery Banks', for example, describes a young woman dreaming of the keelman who picked her up very easily by calling out to her in the street (and not even using her own name!). Unsurprisingly, in view of the keelmen's reputation for violence and drunkenness, Jinny's parents do not approve, but

And in spite o' byeth fethor and mother,	*And in spite of both father and mother,*
Aw'll suen be maw keel-laddie's wife!	*I'll soon be my keel-laddie's wife!*
How happy we'll be then together,	*How happy we'll be then together,*
When he brings hyem his wages ti me,	*When he brings home his wages to me,*
Wiv his bonny bit bairn cryin "Fethur",	*With his pretty small child crying 'Father'*
And another one laid o' my knee.[141]	*And another one laid on my knee.*

3.2 However, the experience of marriage did not always live up to the women's hopes, and some songs describe unhappy experiences. Marriages might fail because the woman is deserted, or the husband cruel; the couple might be parted by war or work, and the risk of death would be more of a threat than it is in the 21st century. Local records as well as songs describe these realities. Desertion, for example, was not a matter to be taken lightly, as it would probably result in the family becoming dependent on the parish. The

[140] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 152

[141] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 335; Roud 3178. The song was also published by Fordyce and Ross (undated), and is still sung and recorded eg Anni Fentiman 'The Sandgate Lass on the Ropery Banks', *The Constant Lovers*, Dragon Records DRGNCD981 1998

Newcastle Courant would publish information about such situations so that the men could be pursued. One such situation, for example, reported

> Ran away and left his family chargeable to the Parochial chapelry of All Saints Newcastle-upon-Tyne John Birkett. Handsome reward if apprehended.[142]

If apprehended, the husband could be punished. Joseph Turpin, 'a rogue and vagabond', was imprisoned for three months for deserting his wife and family in 1820.[143] Abusive relationships were also sometimes a matter of public interest if they resulted in law-breaking. Fordyce records the murder of a woman by her husband in 1843. They lived in extreme poverty in 'two underground rooms', their difficulties intensified by the man's drinking. Neighbours had heard the woman using 'language which would aggravate the most placid and least jealous of husbands';[144] he responded by cutting her throat, and was eventually executed. Drunkenness was also a factor in the murder of Mrs Atkinson by her collier husband. Fordyce notes that their neighbours 'had been too familiar with the unhappy couple quarrelling to pay any attention to the cries of the poor woman'.[145]

3.3 The subject of the song 'Bonny at Morn' may have been one one of those who failed to live up to the standard of the 'respectable' woman described earlier, but, with three children, she seems more likely to have been deserted by her husband, or may have been a widow or had a husband who worked away. Of the 252 people receiving outdoor relief in Gateshead in 1815, sixty-one were widows, forty-one of whom had dependent children, while only two had applied to the parish because their husbands had 'gone and left them', and a small number had husbands in the militia or army.[146]

The life of this song is interesting in itself, regardless of the subject-matter. The title appears in Henry Robson's list of popular Northumbrian song and dance tunes, which he

[142] *Newcastle Courant* 3.1.1824
[143] *Newcastle Courant* 15.1.1820
[144] Fordyce, *Local Records*, 183
[145] Ibid., 423
[146] *Account of the Out Poor of the Parish of Gateshead, Taken in March, 1815; the weekly relief paid to each person or family, and the Dates of Admission in the Parish books* (Newcastle: J & R Akenhead, 1815)

published in 1800.[147] Harker places the text in the 'Children' section when he brings together the songs from Bell's manuscripts[148], along with singing games and fragments. It does not seem to appear in the plethora of chapbooks printed through the earlier nineteenth century, but was included in Bruce & Stokoe's *Northumbrian Minstrelsy* in 1882[149], along with other of Bell's material. Despite its earlier relative rarity, the song is still performed and recorded now[150]. This is an interesting contrast with songs which were popular when first produced and for some time afterwards, but have largely fallen out of use today; 'The Pitman's Courtship' is such an example (see paragraph 2.3 *et seq*).

'Bonny at Morn' is, at one level, a simple lullaby. It is short – only three verses with a refrain – and the version in use today is the same as that collected by Bell early in the 19th century, although he inverts the first and second verses. The mother is singing to her baby, but her lullaby is interspersed with injunctions to either or both of two older children to get up:

Canny at Night and Bonny at Morn Thous over long in thy Bed Bonny at Morn.[151]

There is no mention of a man in the household, and the woman is struggling to manage with a baby to care for and unhelpful older children. She cannot undertake any paid work because of the time taken to look after the baby.

We are All laid idle with keeping the Bairn
The lad wa'net (*will not*) work and the lass wanet learn[152]

There is also a suggestion that there are elements of the family experience which are displaced. While 'The Birds in the Bush and the Trouts in the Burn', which are their proper places, the sheep would not normally be found in the meadow and the 'kye' (cattle)

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[147] Ceolas, 'The Fiddler's Companion', *Ceolas*, November 2003, http://www.ceolas.org/cgi-bin/ht2/ht2-fc2/file=/tunes/fc2.html&style=&refer=&abstract=&ftpstyle=&grab=&linemode=&max+250?laddie+lie+near+me (20.4.09)
[148] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 306
[149] J Collingwood Bruce & John Stokoe (eds), *Northumbrian Minstrelsy: A Collection of the ballads melodies and small-pipe tunes of Northumbria*. (Newcastle: The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1882)
[150] eg Carolyn Robson, *Bonny at Morn*, 'The Northumberland Collection', Park Records PRK CD42 1998, and The Witches of Elswick, *Bonny at Morn*, 'Out of Bed', Fellside FECD180 2003, among others.
[151] Harker, *Bell manuscripts*, 306; Roud 3604
[152] Ibid., 307

should certainly not be amongst the corn. But despite the difficulties of her life, the mother still seems to find some degree of solace in singing[153].

3.4 My interpretation of the song is, of course, a 21st-century one, seen in the light of the many changes in the understanding of women's experiences since 'Bonny at Morn' first appeared. Consider, in contrast, Bruce & Stokoe's view in 1882:

> The song 'Bonny at Morn' gives us a pretty picture of family life. The baby awakes a little too early, but the big lad and the big lass are loath to rise; hence the interjaculatory phrases 'Thou's ower lang in thy bed' in the midst of the song.[154]

This hardly does justice to the themes raised in the song, which recur over the centuries: the struggle faced by unsupported women, the challenges of raising children, and the longing for the stability of things in their proper place. Many songs in various kinds of popular music deal with these matters, and there are several from the North East which are worthy of further consideration. A few record shocking experiences of violence, while others tell stories of abandonment, mistreatment, or simple disappointment that the love which seemed to promise much failed to do so.

3.5 One such was written by Bobby Nunn. Nunn, who died at the age of 45 in 1853[155], was a popular singer, songwriter, and fiddler in Newcastle. His blindness following an accident while working as a slater did not inhibit his observation of the everyday life of the local people, and his songs and performances were very popular. Allan notes[156] that he was particularly well-received as an entertainer at the meeting days of women's friendly societies, which were noted for the opportunity to consume a good deal of drink.[157] Allan points out that some of Nunn's songs were notorious for their innuendoes, and excluded the more coarse material from his collection. However, 'The Sandgate Wife's Nurse Song' is there[158], and one wonders whether it could ever have been performed at one of the

[153] I am grateful to Sandra Kerr for this observation (Conversation in September 2004)
[154] Bruce & Stokoe, *Minstrelsy*, 88-89
[155] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 320
[156] Ibid., 321
[157] Bill Lancaster, 'Sociability and the City' in Colls & Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle*, 328
[158] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 340. Roud B24532.

friendly society events. Perhaps it would have been too sad a song for such occasions, but had it been used, there may well have been several heads nodding assent to its theme.

Like the mother in 'Bonny at Morn', the woman is singing to her baby, but here, the husband is not absent, rather coming back from work. A keelman, Johnny prefers to go drinking instead of going straight home, and when his wife sees him about to arrive, she hurries to start cooking and ensure that the room is clean and tidy. Before this, her lullaby has revealed how much she loves her husband, and she looks for resemblances between the baby and Johnny. She longs for the baby to learn to say 'dada', and looks forward to seeing her husband playing with the child on his knee. She wants to have other children in quick succession. This sounds very homely and comfortable. Johnny, however, like so many of the keelmen, likes to drink, and just the night before had spent everything on alcohol. When he is drunk, he is not above threatening his wife with a knife.

The song does tell of the struggles which a wife might experience in the early 19th century, and Nunn writes with remarkable insight; the wife's longing and desperation for her husband's approval is palpable. However, her experience seems like that of many abused wives of the 21st century, trying to avoid situations which could provoke an attack, such as a meal not ready or an untidy house. It is difficult for those with no experience of domestic violence to understand how a woman can go on loving the perpetrator, which makes Nunn's appreciation of the feelings of this keelman's wife all the more interesting, and his recording of the situation commendable.

3.6 'The Sandgate Wife's Nurse Song' is still occasionally sung and recorded[159], but another song with similar subjects has been included in several collections, and seems to be heard more often. 'The Sandgate Girl's Lamentation'[160] does not refer to a child in the partnership, but this wife regrets her marriage to a keelman, and contemplates all the options she might have chosen instead. However, she married the ugly, foolish keelman, who kicks her downstairs, and leaves her in no doubt that she is to remain in the marriage: 'But I have married a keelman, and that he lets me see.'[161]

[159] Anni Fentiman, 'The Sandgate Wife's Nurse Song', *The Constant Lovers*, Dragon Records DRGNCD981 1998
[160] Bell, *Rhymes* 48, *The Newcastle Songster* (Old Flesh Market, Newcastle: J Marshall. Thought to be c1826 – FARNE), 19, Marshall, *Newcastle Song Book*, 52; Roud 3170
[161] Bell, *Rhymes* 49

Maybe it is because this second song is easier to sing and to hear that it has proved to be more enduring than Nunn's. It has a lively tune, a repetitive format, and, perhaps significantly, a feeling of feisty anger which suggests that the Sandgate Girl is unlikely to be cowed by her unsatisfactory husband. One can imagine that, as she gets older, she may well be a match for the keelman who attempts to kick her down the stairs, especially if he really is the 'perfect fool' that she describes[162]. The Sandgate Wife whom Nunn brings to life so tellingly seems unlikely to reach such a balance in her marital relationship.

3.7 Another wife who experienced even worse abuse was the spouse of 'The Fractious Farmer', a song collected by Bell, who noted it as being from 1792[163]. The wife described in this song suffered on several fronts. Although she had plenty of money, and was both 'handsome and harmless'[164], she was hated by the locals, who knew that the farmer loved his servant girl better, and had done so for some time. Presumably a rich wife was required, rather than one who had been merely a servant, but, once married, the farmer subjected his wife to extensive physical abuse, as well as publicly maintaining his relationship with the servant. The children were required to collude with her mistreatment:

His children he taught with a dutiful grace
To piss upon *Mammy*, and spit on her face;
And laugh when he lash'd her, 'till sickly and sore,
And in storms and in tempests turn'd her to the door.[165]

The song suggests that there is no prospect of escape for the farmer's wife; she loses all self-esteem and perhaps even the will to live.

This song is unlike most of those in Bell's collection in that it is exceptionally violent, and deals with unpleasant matters. It seems unlikely to appeal to the middle-class audience which constituted Bell's targeted customers[166], although perhaps it might have been included as an attempt to provide a balance to other songs, showing that abusive behaviour was not the province of city-dwelling keelmen alone.

[162] Bell, *Rhymes* 48
[163] Ibid., 248; Roud 9035
[164] Ibid., 249
[165] Ibid., 249
[166] Harker, in Bell *Rhymes* xxxviii - xliv

3.8 Unlike the wives of keelmen and colliers, the farmer's wife apparently entered her marriage with money of her own, and the song does not suggest that the farmer himself was poor. Being comfortably-off was certainly no guarantee of a happy marriage. The 'joyful maid' of the song included in Ritson's *North Country Chorister*[167] wants for nothing, and her fashionable clothes are vividly described. However, she agrees to marry a courteous young man, but comes to regret her decision because she becomes a 'sorrowful wife', dressed in rags, with a weary life. No explanation is given for her change of fortunes, and perhaps the song was intended as a warning against selfish indulgence, rather than a discouragement from marriage.

3.9 In the interests of fairness, it should be noted that there are several songs describing violent wives, as well as unsatisfactory husbands. 'Dolly Duggins', for example, 'was an angel first, but prov'd a devil after'[168], although the only example of her misconduct reported is that she failed to provide a good dinner for her husband and his friend. 'The Miller's Wife O'Blaydon' beat her husband, but only because he kissed a maid,[169]while Polly Parker attacked her rival rather than her husband.[170] However, I have found more examples of husbands beating wives than the reverse.

3.10 As paragraph 2.15 describes, pregnancy for a single woman could be the start of a descent into poverty and shame, but even in a loving marriage, maternal and child mortality was an ever-present threat. While pregnancy outside marriage was more common in the working class, the dangers inherent in producing children were common to all women. Perhaps upper class women may have had better healthcare in general, or at least have had the opportunity to take more rest when pregnant, but since 'Reproductive physiology remained poorly understood even by professional medical men into the 19th century'[171], the risks involved in pregnancy, miscarriage, and giving birth were extensive. Poor women suffered even more because of the conditions of the homes in which they

[167] Ritson, 'The Joyful Maid and Sorrowful Wife', *Chorister*, 253; Roud 894
[168] Bodleian Harding B.25(536), published by Angus (Newcastle) between 1774 and 1825; Roud 6500
[169] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 328
[170] Marshall, *Thespian Songster*, 9

[171] Mary Abbott, *English Families 1540-1920*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 26

gave birth.[172] The support available to women of all classes also varied, from doctors (who might or might not be skilled or knowledgeable), to midwives with vast practical experience or a range of 'old wives' tales', and female friends and family members.

The danger in pregnancy is the theme of 'Fair Mabel of Wallington', which was included in both Ritson's and Bell's published collections[173], as well as appearing in seven versions in the Child Ballads.[174] Mabel is one of two surviving sisters from an original family of seven girls and three boys. She is determined not to marry because her five sisters have all died in childbirth, but submits to the expected destiny of every well-born girl of the time when the Lord of Wallington, Sir William Fenwick, asks her mother (who appears to be a widow) for permission to marry her. Mabel prophesies that she will be dead after three-quarters of a year – nine months – and this is indeed what happens. From her death-bed, Mabel begs her remaining sister not to marry, as well as sending for her mother, who, after an angry outburst, arrives at Wallington to greet her broken-hearted son-in-law. Mabel appears to have been kept alive until her mother comes, then she apparently performs a caeserean section on herself to save her child. (Not only does this sound horrific in itself, but at the time of the song's inclusion in Bell's collection, such a procedure, even if carried out by a doctor, would have been almost unheard of. Fordyce records that, on 18th October 1837, 'A very rare and extraordinary operation was performed by Mr Ward, a surgeon ...'[175] to preserve the life of a pregnant woman whose baby had been dead in the womb for several days.)

Mabel's husband seems genuinely devoted to her, and it is her mother who is represented as the least attractive character in the story. It is difficult to see why she should be so determined that her daughters should all marry, given the family's experience of death in childbirth. If she was indeed a widow, it might be understood that she would try to ensure her own security by having a daughter with whom she could spend her old age, but the song tells us that Mabel has three brothers, and it would be quite normal for one of them to

[172] See, for example, the description quoted by Thompson (*Working Class*, 320) of a weaver's wife giving birth on her feet because there are no clean bedclothes.
[173] Ritson, *Northumberland Garland*, 176, Bell, *Rhymes* 147. Roud 59 notes only these two versions as 'Mabel', but the song also appears with the woman named as 'Mary' – see below.
[174] Francis J Child (ed), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (New York: The Folklore Press, 1957) Child 91A. Although the title in Child appears as 'Fair Mary of Wallington', in fact only one version refers to that location; the others are set in Scotland, mainly in Livingston. Child's versions also have differences in the details of the story.
[175] Fordyce, *Local Records*, 83

accommodate their elderly mother. However, when Mabel comes to Wallington as a bride, her mother is there to welcome her, and Mabel comments that the castle may soon be her mother's.

3.11 Although the texts in Bell's *Rhymes* do not have a very strict organization into themes or sources, it is interesting that this song is placed amongst the 'ancient' material such as 'The Battle of Otterburn' (1388), 'The Flowers of the Forest, or Flodden Field' (1513), and 'The Hunting in Chevy Chase'. Indeed, the song follows 'The Battle of Reid Squair' (1576), which includes amongst the participants a Fenwick. Wallington Hall belonged to the Fenwick family from 1475 until 1688, when it was sold to the Blacketts after the line became extinct. However, if Mabel's story was based on fact, it must have taken place before the seventeenth century, as there seems to be no record after 1623 of a Fenwick wife dying in childbirth.[176] Perhaps the inclusion of this song in Bell's collection was part of his attempt to make it attractive to the middle classes as they developed an interest in the local history of all periods. The Society of Antiquaries grew out of the Literary & Philosophical Society in 1813[177], while Usherwood comments that, '.. taste for the old and quaint became entrenched in the mid-century'.[178] As the Blackett and Trevelyan families continued to live in Wallington Hall, their home was decorated with pre-Raphaelite paintings and by depictions of Northumberland history by William Bell Scott in the later part of the nineteenth century.[179] Whether 'Fair Mabel' was real or not, her sad fate is a reminder that it was not only working-class women whose experience of marriage was unhappy.

3.12 It was, however, women of the poorer classes who were likely to lose their husbands and sweethearts to the press gang. Lloyd notes that 'The output of songs concerning the press gang seems to have been particularly vigorous in the north-east ...'[180]. There are three well-known songs about the press gang on Tyneside, two of which are still

[176] Leigh Rayment, 'Baronetage', *Leigh Rayment's Peerage Page*, *2003*-2008, http://www.leighrayment.com/baronetage/baronetsF1.htm (14.3.09)
[177] Harbottle, *Turner*, 115
[178] Paul Usherwood, 'Art on the Margins – from Bewick to Baltic', in Colls & Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle*, 257
[179] *The National Trust*, 2009, www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-wallington (14.3.09)
[180] Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 268

performed and recorded from time to time[181]. 'Oh the Weary Cutter' and 'Here's the Tender Coming' are undated in Bell's manuscript collection, but Harker suggests that they were 'probably current in the mid-1790s, when press-gangs were particularly active on Tyneside, but ... may well be older'[182].

The Impress Service had operated in England since Elizabethan times, and was used over the years as the demands of war required. For this reason, it was informally discontinued after Trafalgar in 1805, as Britain was not involved in any significant sea battles until the First World War. By 1849, the song, 'Canny Aud Sheels', reflects this change, describing how the press gang would lurk

To nab *(capture)* lasses' sweethearts abord iv his creels (*baskets used for a catch of fish*).
Now sailors are free, navy still strong and true,
Unlike days when tenders were
Disgracin' wor country, and robin' aud Sheels (*North & South Shields at the mouth of Tyne)*[183]

3.13 In 1755, there were 10,000 sailors in the English navy, and by 1760, during the Seven Years War, 85,000 were needed, while there were 80,000 active seamen outside the navy.[184] However, The Recruiting Act of 1703 had been introduced to protect the coal trade, and so '... entire categories of seamen were officially exempt, including sailors ... in , the collier trade ...'[185]. As Colls's comment in paragraph 1.8 records, the keelmen were vital to the country's war effort, and this, linked with the law, and the fact that keelmen constituted the majority of male employment in the early nineteenth century[186], suggests that the fear in the songs about the press gang might be exaggerated. However, those involved in the activities of the press did not always operate within the law, and Lloyd notes that the terror of capture meant that only old men and children would be sent out to undertake public tasks, men would go into hiding, and people were afraid to sleep in their

[181] eg Backshift, 'Weary Cutters/The Tender Coming/The Keel Row', *Moonlighting*, Monkside Studios MONKCD2 n d
[182] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts* 5 & 6 Roud 8772 & 3174
[183] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, 130-131; Roud B124164
[184] Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004), 295
[185] Ibid., 295
[186] Joyce Ellis, ''The Black Indies': The Economic Development of Newcastle c1700-1840', in Colls & Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle*, 6

own beds.[187] The woman in 'The Weary Cutter' suggests that a guinea might persuade the men on the cutter to overlook her lover, while the narrator in 'Here's the Tender Coming' seems panic-stricken and unable to find a course of action, an atmosphere which is echoed in the pattern of the tune.

3.14 No author is noted for either of those two songs, but the third, 'The Sandgate Lassie's Lament'[188], is the work of Henry Robson, who was alive in the mid-1790s and would have been aware of the impact of the press-gangs. The song appears in several of the chapbooks of the period. This Sandgate girl, losing her lover to the press-gang, is still at the stage of seeing her keelman as her 'Bonnie Keel Laddie' [189], and much regrets his loss, unlike her counterpart in 'The Sandgate Girl's Lamentation' described in paragraph 3.6. The girl in Robson's song is keen to ensure that if her laddie returns safely, they will immediately be married. While this wish is repeated in other songs (eg see paragraph 3.1), it would also be acceptable to the song's potential middle-class audience, although given the keelmen's reputation, might not be completely convincing.

The proper place

3.15 Writers like Hannah More and Jane West promoted the necessity for wives to accept their proper place in the relationship within marriage, and this is echoed in songs. For example, the protagonists in 'Sawney Ogilby's Duel With His Wife'[190] are a husband who, though otherwise considered intelligent, made an ill-judged marriage, and a wife who is determined to have to the dominant position in the partnership, and will go to any lengths, including serious violence, to attain it. 'The Struggle for the Breeches' gives general advice about marriage from a father to his son. However much he loves his wife, he must 'never let her wear the breeches'[191]. He tells of his own experience when his wife hit his head with a ladle because of his failure to give an account of his activities at market. She then pursued him while he was ploughing, so he felt obliged to whip her home over hedges and ditches. This reflects the normal standard of the time which held that the

[187] Lloyd, *Folk Song*, 266
[188] Bell, *Rhymes* 302, Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 114. This song is still sung and recorded, for example by Megson, 'The Sandgate Lassie's Lament', *Take Yourself a Wife*, EDJ Records EDJ015, 2008
[189] Bell, *Rhymes* 7; Roud 3170
[190] Bell, *Rhymes* 184. Although, according to Allan (*Tyneside Songs*, 10/11), Whittle was writing in the 1730s, his work was not published until later, and the reprinting of this song by Bell and Allan so many years later suggests it was 'popular' within the terms of this work.
[191] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 335; Roud 8984

husband was head of the household. O'Connell records that 'the fight for the breeches'[192] was a common theme in popular broadsides. Harker's notes to 'The Grassington Stang' include an extract from J T Brockett's 'A Glossary of North Country Words' (Newcastle 1829) which describes this violent and degrading punishment taking place when, among other social misdemeanours, '... a woman has gained an improper ascendency over her husband ...'[193]. (Thompson records that the 'stang' was also inflicted on blacklegs, informers, and violent husbands.[194])

3.16 Two songs ridicule wives who assert their independence by wearing 'bloomers', and both see the wearing of 'men's' garments as a statement that the women wish to take on the male rôle. In 'The Bloomers', the writer declares that soon it will not be possible to tell men and women apart, except by groping 'their smooth long chin'[195], and eventually, men will be forced to wear petticoats. Ross published Robson's 'Wor Mally Turned Bloomer', in which the women are compared to dancing baboons. However, Mally's husband is slightly mollified in response to her invitation, 'Just feel maw waist wivoot the stays!'[196], as he discovers that lacing spoils women, a step forward from the disapproval voiced by the observer of the women of Sandgate (see paragraph 2.10). Nevertheless, wives cannot be allowed to deviate from what is normally respectable, and although Mally helps herself to her husband's clothes, stick, and tobacco, and makes him cook dinner, she cannot cope with getting up in time to do his shift at work, and gives up being a bloomer.

Although these songs are undated, it seems likely that they were written between approximately 1850 and 1860. Harker records that Robson accused Ross of plagiarising his work in 1850[197], and the Bodleian Collection notes that Ross's broadsides were printed between 1847 and 1852. The Bodleian does not include a date for Walker's work. Amelia Bloomer, an American, had been awakened to the cause of women's rights at the Seneca Falls conference of 1849, and, although she did not invent the loose trousers, tight at the ankle, which attracted such attention, she wrote so much to promote this 'rational dress' that they became known by her name. While these two songs appear simply to ridicule

[192] O'Connell, *Popular Print*, 110
[193] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 344; Roud 8982
[194] E P Thompson, *Customs in Common*, (London: The Merlin Press Ltd, 1991), 485-486
[195] Bodleian Firth c.21(106) (J Walker: Durham 18 -)
[196] *Untitled chapbook* (Newcastle: J Ross, n d), 3
[197] Harker, 'Tyneside Concert Hall', 52

such unconventional attire, there seems to be more than a hint of panic in their response to the idea of wives seeking any sort of independence.

3.17 Towards the end of the nineteenth century, companionate marriage became increasingly usual and acknowledged.[198] This was reflected in songs, and in the North East, Joe Wilson in particular wrote sensitively, if sometimes sentimentally, on themes such as 'Me Little Wife at Hyem *(home)*'[199] and 'The Time That Me Fethur Wes Bad *(ill)*'[200]. In the period covered by this research, there were also songs depicting husbands and wives supportive of each other (see the examples in paragraphs 5.5, 6.4, and 7.5 for example), and, looking back on this chapter, perhaps the songs I have chosen to examine because of their interesting features paint an unfairly gloomy picture of the experience of North East wives. However, the stories therein do represent what was the reality for some, even if they were in a minority, suggesting through popular song that Wollstonecraft's reservations about marriage had a good deal of foundation in truth.

[198] Wally Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm: Working-Class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline* (London: Verso, 1993), 132
[199] C E Catcheside-Warrington, *Tyneside Songs Volume II*, (Newcastle: J G Windows, 1929), 8
[200] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 48, dated 1869

Chapter 4

4. Sex and seduction

'The sexual attention of man particularly acts on female sensibility, and this sympathy has been exercised from their youth up.'[201]

'A woman who has lost her honour imagines that she cannot fall lower, and as for recovering her former station, it is impossible; no exertion can wash this stain away.'[202]

4.1 Wollstonecraft is commenting here on the way girls were brought up to indulge their emotions, and how the men who become their husbands played on this. Several songs available in the North East portray their female subjects as vulnerable to the wiles of the men they meet, and often seduced very quickly. 'Roving John' is in Bell's manuscript collection[203], and 'The Roving Ploughboy'[204] included amongst the *Songs of North East Pitmen*, but both have the same theme: a man who travels around seducing women and avoiding any responsibility. The difference (other than that of presentation) is that Roving John already has a lover whom he intends to marry (despite one pregnant girl and four other sweethearts), while the ploughboy settles down to marriage after his adventures, and gives up his roving ways. In both songs, women are shown as very susceptible to the charms of an attractive man. The outcome for Molly is predictable: she becomes pregnant to Roving John. He offers her fifty guineas for a nurse's fee, which may be to procure an abortion rather than for the delivery, as John states he does not wish it to be said that he 'lay so close'[205] to such a modest girl. Like the Sandgate Wife, however, Molly still wants the man who has mistreated her rather than his money. 'The Roving Ploughboy' works his way around the entire North East, as far north as Bellingham, and south to Stockton. His varied conquests include a dancer, a maid, a milkmaid, and a gipsy girl. He is cautious about avoiding disease for himself, but has no concern for the future of the women, including the one who finally marries him.

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[201] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 158
[202] Ibid., 167
[203], Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, undated, 260 Roud 8742
[204] Harker, *NE Pitmen*, undated, 317
[205] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 260

4.2 ‘Coming Across the Moor’[206] is another song on the same theme, and the five short verses are narrated by the man himself, the girl, and her mother. The man, perhaps some sort of packman, has sex with a girl he meets on the moor. There is the suggestion that she was young and innocent enough to be unaware of what is going on (‘’Wie something else that kikt me there’[207]), though that may be a little disingenuous. The man comments that the girl has put all the blame for the incident on him, and the mother is very angry, but the last verse implies that the girl was, in the end, not completely dissatisfied with the encounter.

4.3 Betty Howson was another young woman easily led astray, this time by her brother’s workman[208]. Having achieved his object, this man Atkinson goes on to seduce a less respectable girl. His friend pretends to be a priest to ‘marry’ them, and when this news reaches Betty, she dies; no more is heard of Atkinson’s second conquest. Thus the message is sent out that young women who allow themselves to lose their reputation will come to a bad end.

4.4 The *Northern Liberator* reported in 1839 that the wife of a Sunderland workman, Thomas Vasey, had attempted suicide. She had tried to cut her throat with a small knife because of rumours that she had had ‘illicit intercourse’ with their lodger. The paper commented on the distressing impact of malicious gossip.[209]

The determination of what is appropriate, and therefore respectable, for women (and, of course, for men) is a constant feature of society, although its redefinition might not be recognized until much later. What is ‘normal’ in everyday experience often – perhaps usually – changes so slowly that the fact of the change is only perceived in retrospect. Steinbach outlines how the respectability of a working-class family might be defined by other women of the same class in the nineteenth century:

> ... how conscientious a woman was about returning borrowed items; whether a family needed its female head to earn wages ... whether a couple was legally

[206] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, undated, 260 Roud 8141
[207] Ibid., 261
[208] Ritson, *Bishopric Garland*, 27, Bell, *Rhymes* 271
[209] *Northern Liberator* 17.8.1839

> married ... whether husband or wife drank ... attended church services ... could afford a proper funeral ...[210]

4.5 However, changes in the understanding of anatomy and the development of new ideas about desire and sexuality in the eighteenth century, influenced by the opinions of Rousseau and others, led to different standards in what constituted respectability in relationships. Steinbach comments that, ' 'Respectable' women were reconceptualized as 'passionless'; they had sex in the interests of procreation, marital harmony, or motherhood, but rarely if ever in response to their own desire.'[211] Faderman quotes Thomas Branagan, writing in 1808, warning young men

> ... to test the virtue of a woman whom they wish to marry by making sexual advances to her. If she does not respond with "becoming abhorrence", she is not a proper girl and would not make a good wife.[212]

Thus someone like the nameless Mrs Vasey could lose her respectability (her honour, in Wollstonecraft's terms) if she was discovered to have been having an affair, and recovery from that would be almost impossible. It was not only that she was seen to be unfaithful to her husband, but she had also displayed an appetite for sex which was not acceptable.

Another outcome of her sexual activity might be pregnancy, and having an illegitimate child was often a shameful experience, as evidenced by Jeannie Sutton's life. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, there was an increase in illegitimate births (up from 2% to 5%) and of brides who were pregnant on marriage (increased from 15% to 33%).[213] As the long eighteenth century had progressed, one reason for the increase in illegitimate births was the postponement of marriage because of hardship, while at the same time, more couples were having sexual intercourse before marriage.[214] Levine sees this period as a 'respite' between the influence of the Puritans and the Victorians.[215] There was a stigma to single-motherhood, partly because it was a threat to the family-based structure of

[210] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 14
[211] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 106
[212] Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (London: The Women's Press, 1997), 158
[213] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 109 and Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism*, (London: Academic Press Ltd, 1977), 134
[214] Steinbach, ibid, 109
[215] Levine, *Family Formation*, 131

society[216], but there could also be sympathy for women whose pregnancy was the result of an expectation of marriage which had not been fulfilled. However, 'repeaters'[217] would be unlikely to get support, either at a personal or official level, which could lead to extreme suffering.

4.6 The support available to single pregnant women was minimal. The Poor Married Women's Lying-in Hospital in Newcastle required both husband and wife to swear to the husband's resources, and a certificate confirming the date and time of the marriage was essential. Mothers also had to bring with them one child's dress, presumably as evidence that the couple were making some effort to provide for the expected baby.[218] Thus life was hard enough for a poor woman if she was married, but was almost impossible for those who were pregnant and unmarried. The *Newcastle Courant* reported several instances of infanticide, including the conviction of 23-year-old Rebecca Laws, who worked at the Turf Hotel and went home to the country because she was 'ill'. A smell in the hotel led to the discovery of the body of a baby boy hidden in the flue of her room.[219] Hannah Haddon, a single woman, was put on trial for concealing the birth of an illegitimate child, but it transpired that she had had a miscarriage at three months.[220] Even such a personal matter was public business if it was thought that the woman had broken the rules of appropriate conduct.

Paragraph 3.10 comments on one woman's submission to the inevitability of pregnancy in marriage, and its sad outcome. Single women who became pregnant must ideally persuade the man to marry them, and some songs suggest the girl's mother would be instrumental in this. In the song 'Jeannie's Towte' (*ailment*), her mother[221] includes a racial insult ('nigger') as she verbally attacks her daughter and her seducer. Jenny Gowan's grandmother[222] calls her 'slut and brazen fac'd' for running off with her lover in 'The Felton Garland'. The mother of the 'Sweet Pretty Maiden' is of a similar mind in calling her daughter 'a common whore'.[223] However, 'The Old Woman Clothed in Gray' gives

[216] Walvin, *English Urban Life*, 174
[217] Abbott, *English Families*, 33
[218] Mackenzie, *Newcastle*, 518
[219] *Newcastle Courant* 6.8.1825
[220] *Newcastle Courant* 12.8.1820
[221] Harker, *Bell manuscripts* 255, this version 1823
[222] Bell, *Rhymes* 194; Roud B38593
[223] Harker, *Bell manuscripts*, 319 Roud 899

her daughter only 'a bit gentle rebuke'[224], saving the worst of her ire for Roger, the seducer. In general, then, most of the responsibility for becoming pregnant falls to the woman, which is why there are also several songs warning girls to be on their guard when having anything to do with men: for example, 'Mind Lassie What You Do'[225], and 'The Sprig of Thyme'[226]. Fulfilling the imperative of marriage, however, could be achieved in a variety of ways, usually by simply persuading the man to comply, but two songs provide an interesting contrast. The fairytale ending is found in 'A Sweet Pretty Maiden Sat Under a Tree', when 'the great Sir John'[227] (who seems likely to be the father of the expected child) sweeps the girl off to London to be his lady and wear silver slippers. Roger, however, will only be persuaded to marry the girl he has seduced if her mother – the old woman in gray - makes her her heir; on marriage, this would mean that, effectively, Roger will inherit the land and wealth. It is noteworthy that Roger does not talk about marrying Jill; his offer is to take her off her mother's hands. Having lost her virginity and become pregnant, the daughter's value as a commodity to her wealthy mother has been compromised, and in fact she has become worthless.

4.7 Given the essentiality of respectability described by Wollstonecraft, the relatively small amount of negatively judgemental language in relevant songs is quite surprising. Perhaps the writers intended to leave it to hearers to express their own disapproval, although, as most of the songs in this chapter are found in Bell's manuscript collection rather than his published *Rhymes*, the audience may not have been large. Perhaps songs on themes of sex and seduction were considered inappropriate for respectable women to hear, and the choice of whether to listen or not was taken away from them, particularly as the nineteenth century progressed.

[224] Ibid., 288; Roud 1694
[225] Ibid., 12; Roud 8972
[226] Ibid., 261, noted as from 1841; Roud 3
[227] Ibid., 319

Chapter 5

5. The working woman

'Many poor women maintain their children by the sweat of their brow, and keep together families that the vices of the fathers would have scattered abroad ... '[228]

'How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty than the most accomplished beauty!'[229]

5.1 The songs of the North-East include many references to the work undertaken by women. Sometimes the activity is incidental to the main theme of the song, and sometimes it is referred to to describe or reinforce some other aspect of life. For example, the handsome, wholesome lasses of Liddisdale make 'the hills ring with their notes'[230], and the lads dance as well as they work. This tells us something about what is expected of the best sort of young worker, but the song is really about the idyllic and idealised country life of the area. Similarly, if the woman depicted as 'The Quayside Shaver'[231] were working today, she might attract attention as someone following a non-traditional occupation. However, the editor's note to the song points out that this work had been mainly undertaken by women, and so hardly noteworthy for that reason. Although the song provides a wonderfully vivid description of street life on the Quayside, it says little about the woman herself, except that she seems confident and copes easily with her grumbling customers. She is assertively in control of her workspace, however small that might be, and although the men complain, there is no real suggestion that their niggles about their shaves arose because it was a woman doing the work. 'Newcastle Landlords, 1834'[232] describes both women and men who kept pubs in Newastle in that year, and both sexes are commended and criticised equally only in respect of their professional competence. However, the changes over several years in the words of one song about a working woman reflect changes in the perception of what was acceptable in female activities and conduct.

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[228] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 174
[229] Ibid., 268
[230] Harker, *Bell Manuscripts*, 'The Lands of Liddisdale', 99; Roud 8777
[231] Bell, *Rhymes*, 43-45, by William Stephenson, with note that these arrangements were in the past in 1812; Roud 9026
[232] Allan, *Tyneside Songs* 211; Roud B19621

5.2 Some of the texts of the song 'Elsie Marley' are shown in Appendix 2. Alice (or, more commonly, Elsie) Marley was, according to Allan, 'a handsome, buxom, bustling landlady, and brought good custom to the house by her civility and attention.'[233] The song about her has been re-printed several times; Roud (3065) gives eleven instances of it. Elsie's story is interesting in itself[234], with details of her business success with her husband Ralph, her son, and her sad end. Bruce & Stokoe write that local records state that, in 1768, Elsie had a fever, fell into an old coal-pit, and was drowned.[235] However, as far as the song is concerned, it is the differences between some of the versions which may be significant.

One variation comes in the refrain in Bell's version, recording her experience of having her purse stolen on the Sandhill when she was on her way to pay her quarterly bills, but it is the inclusion or omission of the final verse which gives a clue about how women were perceived over the period in which the song was printed.

The song describes how Elsie is a business-woman, wife, and mother, admired both for her success and for her personal qualities. Bruce & Stokoe believe that the song 'preserves the memory of one who, in her day, had attained some notoriety as a general public entertainer.'[236]She has improved her neat appearance by wearing the gift of a velvet cap, and can enjoy the fruits of her success by staying in bed until after 8.00am. However, she must not be allowed to get above herself, and has to be derided for having 'grown so fine'[237]. The song has up to nine verses which report various aspects of Elsie's achievements, but it is the repeated chorus of Ritson's and Allan's version which reinforces the message that she is too lazy to get up and feed the pigs. However, in Ritson's and Bell's versions, the final verse is intended to soften the impact of any negative messages by explaining that it is a joke and not meant to be offensive.

5.3 Over the years since the earlier versions of the song, a new stereotype of appropriate behaviour for women had emerged. Coventry Patmore's poem, 'The Angel in the House', was first published in 1854, and became a popular expression of what was expected of a respectable wife, at least amongst the middle classes.

[233] Sharpe, *Bishoprick Garland*, 48
[234] Sharpe, *Bishoprick Garland*, 48-50
[235] Bruce & Stokoe, *Minstrelsy*, 114
[236] Bruce & Stokoe, *Minstrelsy*, 114
[237] Ritson, *Bishopric Garland*, 164; Bell, *Rhymes* 285, Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 22

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
...
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers;[238]

Rowbotham comments that this notion of women's proper function was particularly attractive to middle-class men in a competitive market, who could look to women for the emotional element of life which was lacking at work.[239]

The idea developed that men should be able to earn enough to maintain a family, and that a wife should be financially dependent on him and not have to work outside the home. Donahay comments,

> The equation of men and work was part of a redefinition of the division of labor in gender terms in the nineteenth century.[240]

This fundamental premiss that work was something done by men, and which was crucial in defining their masculinity, was the basis for then defining the 'other' – appropriate female conduct, the requirement for increased domesticity, and even the appearance of women and their homes. In this, however, there was scope for criticism whatever the woman might do. Like Elsie Marley, the wife of Bob, a blackleg, is seen as 'getting above herself' round about 1844 by having an 'ornament'[241] outside her front door, which she polishes with pride, and a garden of pebbles and chalk. Her pretention is made worse, of course, by the fact that it comes from her husband's unacceptable work practices. In

[238] Twells, *British Women's History*, 32. Twells notes that, in the 1930s, Virginia Woolf declared that the work was so potent that it was part of the responsibility of a woman writer to kill the Angel in the House (15)
[239] Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It.* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 20
[240] Martin A Donahay, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art, and Masculinity*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2005)
[241] Harker, *NE pitmen* 260 'The Blacklegs'

contrast, the wife of 'The Collier Swell'[242] refuses to amend her manners to meet her husband's raised aspirations when he comes into money. She eats with her fingers, uses vulgar language, and even rides a horse astride.

Rowbotham[243] records that the idea of a man being required to earn enough to support his family began to gain currency in the seventeenth century, although 'The provisioning onus is an ancient one, the cornerstone of patriarchal ideologies in a great variety of cultures.'[244] However, the notion became established as the ideal standard in the middle of the nineteenth century. 'To fully become a "man" in Victorian society required marriage and a child.'[245] Women ought not to detract from that ideal by undertaking paid work themselves, although most poor women would have little choice in the matter.

It may be that Allan's omission of the final mitigating verse is simply a feature of his editing. Harker points out that he changes a vulgar reference in one of Nunn's songs[246], and, after all, Bruce & Stokoe in 1882 describe the song as 'gently satirising'.[247] However, Allan's apparent reservations about Elsie are consistent with common attitudes of the time.

5.4 Harker also draws attention to later editing of another song about a woman and her employment. Ned Corvan's song, 'The Cullercoats Fishwife' appeared in his third Song Book.[248] It is a combination of song and patter, a particularly popular and effective part of Corvan's stage performances[249], but Harker points out that Allan, in his 1891 edition of 'Tyneside Songs' has transformed her to a 'Fish Lass',

> ... and her former robust, self-confident and extroverted personality gets moderated to a curious and unnecessary insistence on her being sexually ... pure ... The original uninhibited woman is rendered, in Allan's version, as a

[242] Harker, *NE Pitmen* 152; Roud B4687. Harker points out, however, in Allan *Tyneside Songs* xi that this song was produced by the printer George Walker on behalf of the owners, so the contempt it expresses is about working class culture as well as women.
[243] Rowbotham, *Hidden from History*, 3
[244] Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm*, 111
[245] Donahay, *Gender at Work*, 111
[246] Harker in Allan's *Tyneside Songs*, xxvi
[247] Bruce & Stokoe, *Minstrelsy*, 114
[248] Ned Corvan, *Corvan's Song Book* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: W Stewart, n d, but probably 1860s), 11; Roud B95510
[249] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 391

> mawkish, prissy caricature.[250]

I think Harker overstates his case here, and he gives the example of her reference to being 'pure as a dewdrop'[251] as one demonstration of Allan's modification of the text, while in fact it is in Corvan's version that this description is found[252]. Nevertheless, there are certainly differences in the two versions which merit consideration in relation to the representation of working women.

Corvan's song originally included six verses, while Allan's has only three, and although both have two sections of patter, the longer one in each version is completely different. Allan notes that the song is from 'Author's Manuscript, 1862'[253] The differences in the patter may arise from the simple practical fact that performers change their material to suit the audience, and that originally approved for publication by Corvan himself may have been for a different occasion than the manuscript seen by Allan (if, indeed, he did see it personally). Corvan's fishwife speaks of the hardship experienced by fishermen generally, her own father, and herself, but reflects that many wealthy people are not as happy as she[254]. In Allan, it is very easy to imagine the patter in use before a live paying audience. [255]The 'fish lass' describes the various 'queer fish'[256] around locally, nationally, and internationally, and includes an advertisement for Allan's song collection. Finally she sets out her own position on life:

> Aw's a maiden fish oot iv her teens in sairch ov a husband to myek me comfortable. Aw want ti tyek moorins for life in the roads an' channels o' matrimony.[257]

In both versions of the song, the fish wife/lass declares that she is ready to deal with any young men who dare to look at her legs, which, like her feet, are bare. In Corvan, she

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[250] Harker in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, xxvi
[251] Ibid., xxvi
[252] Corvan, *Song Book*, 13
[253] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 406
[254] Corvan, *Song Book*, 12
[255] Vicinus, when describing performances by Billy Purvis in travelling theatre, comments on 'how each performance differed as Billy responded to different audiences' (*Industrial* Muse, 243), while music hall audiences expected each nightly event to be the same. While Corvan might have been pandering to Allan's potential buyers in the printed version of the song, he was so enormously popular that perhaps Allan had been able to persuade him to maximise his commercial potential!
[256] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 406
[257] Allan, *Tyneside* Songs, 406

states she is 'pure as the dewdrop tho' [she] likes a drop gin'[258], and in Allan she records her 'maiden' status. Corvan's heroine, however, is committed to working hard for a living, despite the struggle that requires. Allan also includes that reference, but the song ends on the note that she is seeking a husband in order to settle down in conventional matrimony. As Elsie Marley's story also suggests, the proper place for a respectable woman is to be at home as a wife, and not to be a successful businesswoman.

5.5 There is another fishwife who seems to combine successfully not only the duties of a wife with business, but also that of leadership. Euphemia Scott – Heuphy or Euphy – was married to 'Geordy', as described in the song 'Lukey's Dream'. The narrator dreams that one of the Newcastle characters, Billy Scott, has died, and sees many mourning his passing:

His nyemsyek *(namesake)*, Euphy Scott, was there,
Her bonny Geordy, tee, man;
Distress'd, they cried, this happy pair,
Ne mair we will him see, man.[259]

Euphy seems to have been a raucous character, but was clearly popular and must have made a memorable impression locally. Harker quotes an extract from Robert Emery's 'Sandhill Oratory', describing an encounter between (H)euphy and a colonel, in which the soldier tries to object to the price of her wares. Euphy's response is very vulgar, and Harker suggests that the song would have been intended for private circulation. (However, an almost identical song appears in a broadside printed by S Thompson of Newcastle, written by J Holling, and dated by the Bodleian collection as between 1823 and 1825. In this version, the 'heroine' is not named, but the colonel dines out on the story, and tells everyone about the 'vulgar wit [of] *The Fish Wench of the Tyne*.'[260] Perhaps the fact that the broadside would have been readily available meant that it would have been unwise to identify a specific person, as George Ridley discovered when he wrote 'Cushie

[258] Ibid., 13
[259] *The Songs of the Tyne: Being a Collection of Popular Local Songs* (Newcastle: John Ross n d), 10; Roud B45471. Allan states in *Tyneside Songs* (326) that the song was by Nunn.
[260] Bodleian Harding B.16(157)

Butterfield'. It is said that he had to leave town for a while to escape irate members of the heroine's family after the song was published.[261])

The fishwives elected a 'queen' who would be their leader and spokeswoman, a procedure which was also followed by the 'greenwives', or quayside vegetable-sellers:

A leader let's choose, a virago so bold
The word let her give, and we rarely will scold.[262]

In 'The Newcastle Worthies', Euphy's rôle is described:

Of fishwives tee, that's i' the toon up to the present day
Euphy Scott she is prime minister to Queen Madgie Grey
The understrappers and descendants hear it's ony *(only)* fit
That she's rul'd the market as she lik'd an' sae *(so)* will she yet.[263]

This suggests that Euphy is the one with the power, through her personality, if not the official title. It is difficult to determine when Euphy was working, as most of the material is undated, but 'The Fishwives' Lament On Removal from Sandhill to New Fish Market' was about an event which took place in January 1826, and refers to 'sweet Madge, wor queen'.[264] However, in 'Euphy's Coronation', she is elected as queen of the fishwives, although Madge is still active: 'Euphy and Madge were the gaze i' the show'[265]. The same song describes her as honest, and she also seems to have some talent for singing. At her coronation, Euphy 'by their humble request she the 'Keel Row' did sing'[266], and when the unpopular new fish market was opened, William Mid[t]ford records 'Euphy, the Queen, singing "Maw canny Geordie".'[267] When J P Robson edited the new edition of *Songs of the Bards of the Tyne* in 1849, he included 'The Fishwives Lament' (p64), 'The Newcastle Worthies' (p96), and 'Euphy's Coronation' (p228). Robson's introduction

[261] Manders, *Gateshead*, 330 and FARNE http://www.asaplive.com/archive/detail.asp?id=T0122001 (20.4.09)
[262] 'The Green-wives' Lamentation', in *The Newcastle Song Book, or Tyneside Songster*, (Newcastle: J Marshall, 1842), 70
[263] *Untitled chapbook* (4), (Newcastle: W R Walker, n d), 4, and Thompson, Shield, Midford, Robson, *A Collection of Songs*, 196; Roud B123205
[264] *Untitled chapbook* (6), (Newcastle: W R Walker, n d), 4
[265] *The Newcastle Songster, being a collection of Curious and Interesting Local Songs No 2* (Newcastle: W Fordyce, n d), 18; Roud B7590
[266] Ibid., 19
[267] *The Newcastle Song Book, or Tyneside Songster*, 137

comments that not all the songs from earlier editions of the collection have been included because some are 'ephemeral', or relate only to political matters of their time[268]. It is a tribute to this loud, vulgar, working woman that she was still sufficiently well-known or remembered to have songs about her reprinted more than forty years after they first appeared. Although some of the references to Euphy might be seen as a little patronising, there does not seem to be any element of disapproval, rather a degree of admiration for her loyalty and self-confidence. Unlike Elsie Marley, Euphy Scott might have been 'queen' within her own circle, but she did not seek to 'get above herself' by adopting more middle-class attributes like a velvet cap and late rising!

5.6 Some of these songs depict vividly the determination and effort of women working in the North East during the period covered by this research, along with something of the range of jobs they undertook. Wollstonecraft comments that the woman who supports herself by working is admirable, and the songs provide some evidence of agreement with this from their authors, but there is also a suggestion that their success as workers should not be flaunted.

[268] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, v

Chapter 6

6. Domestic duties

'To fulfill domestic duties much resolution is necessary, and a serious kind of perseverance that requires a more firm support than emotions, however lively and true to nature.'[269]

6.1 Wollstonecraft is writing here about the duties which fell to the middle-class woman, and relate particularly to the responsibility for bringing up children. However, her words would perhaps also have rung true to the poor women of the time, who needed considerable resolve to cope with the challenges of their domestic duties. One feature of women's responsibilities which, like unequal pay, remains unresolved after 200 years, is the fact of 'the dual call of work and home on women's time and energy'[270], and the physical effort this required in the period covered by this research was enormous. Women who went out to work retained the responsibility for managing the home. At a time when urban housing was often poor, with minimal facilities which meant it could take two days to complete the family laundry[271], the physical burden of housework and paid work was significant. As the 19th century progressed, men of both the working and middle classes began to divide their time into work and leisure, neither of which included housework. Maintaining the home efficiently in such difficult circumstances did not even carry any status, because 'housework' was not 'work'; it was merely a wife's duty, and thus unexceptional.[272] Additionally, there were women whose work was unpaid and unrecognized because it was part of the activity undertaken in the home for which her husband got paid. Steinbach gives the example of the wife of a weaver who wound bobbins for her husband[273], making a vital contribution to the family's survival, but receiving no financial reward for it, and, like the female employees in the factories, retaining the responsibility for home and children.

[269] Wollstonecraft, Vindication, 162
[270] Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 125
[271] Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm*, 46-47
[272] Donahay, *Gender at Work*, 77
[273] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 11

6.2 ‘The Worth of a Husband’ is a song published by Fordyce around 1840, and by Stephenson between 1820 and 1850. It gives guidance to wives on how to fulfill their duty to care for their husbands. The chorus summarises the recommended approach:

To kiss him often, cuddle him well, call him your heart’s delight,
And give him three good meals a day, & a quart of ale at night.[274]

The song advises that the wife must walk behind her husband, instantly beg his pardon for any fault, and accept any drunkenness and beatings. It would be good to think that this was intended to be ironic, and, over all, perhaps it is a mildly amusing exaggeration, but other material suggests that there is some degree of accuracy about what was expected of a married woman in the home.

6.3 Round about 1830, Marshall published a new songbook, and it included a song about a washing day.[275] Thomas Wilson of Gateshead saw it, was not impressed by it, and wrote what he considered to be a more accurate account of such an occasion[276]; his version appeared in Robson’s 1849 collection[277] and is still performed. Wilson’s song is certainly livelier than the original, and the picture that he draws is vivid. He writes entirely from the point of view of the long-suffering husband, whose comfort is disturbed by his wife’s bad temper should the weather on washing day be wet. The wife is soundly criticized for hitting the children, pushing the husband out of the way, upsetting the animals, and failing to clean the house. There is no explanation of why the husband is in the house to be pushed out of the way, and, of course, no suggestion that he do anything to help with the washing. The wife’s bad temper is censured, but there is no acknowledgment of her achievement in completing the task – just that she easily recovers her temper with ‘A cup and blast o’ baccy’[278]. Although Wilson’s version is certainly critical of the wife’s bad temper, it does at least portray her at the end as having recovered her apparently more usual demeanour. The original song notes that the wife is usually bonny and good, except on washing days, when she becomes a ‘devil’.

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[274] Bodleian Harding B 11(4328), Roud B30908
[275] *The Minstrel: a new Song Book containing the following celebrated songs*, (Newcastle: J Marshall n d), 14
[276] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 264, where Wilson’s letter (dated 7th November 1831) to the editor of the ‘Newcastle Magazine’ is reproduced. Roud B116450
[277] Robson, *Songs of the Bards*, 409
[278] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 266

Hoggett of Durham published the original version of 'The Washing Day' and complements it in his broadside with 'Fuddling Day'[279], a response from a wife who prays that her husband will keep from having a day of drinking and smoking, when he becomes a devil, rather than his usual civil self. Unlike Wilson's revision, both the original 'Washing Day' and 'Fuddling Day' seem to have disappeared from popular performance now.

6.4 Money could be a cause of discord in the home, and the struggle to make ends meet would be a constant challenge to the working-class wife's perseverance. Two contrasting songs published on one broadsheet by Fordyce of Newcastle around 1840 describe different approaches to the management of household finances.

'The Satisfied Husband, or One Pound One', by John Morgan, demonstrates how a good wife can account for every penny of the husband's meagre wage. The song ends with the husband's expression of satisfaction:

Scarce one man out of fifty the house expences knows,
But I at least am satisfied which way the money goes.[280]

However, 'I Wonder Where the Money Goes'[281] provides an alternative outcome. In this song, the husband tells his wife she must save money by giving up tea, and she responds by forbidding him to drink beer. Unfortunately, when the woman forsakes tea, she starts to drink gin instead. The couple end up fighting, but the song closes with a hope for better times.

In contrast, a song by Thomas Wilson gives an account of the planning of a shopping expedition which is hopeful and contented. The husband, a miner, has earned more than expected, so the wife will be able to have a new dress, as well as buying clogs for their son, a ribbon for their daughter, and other treats. Finally, they look forward to a cake for tea, and the enjoyment of each other's company.[282]

[279] Bodleian, Harding B 11(1267); Roud B67268
[280] Bodleian, Firth b.25(256) Roud B4956
[281] Bodleian, Firth b.25(256), Walker B12181, Fordyce 12182
[282] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 275: 'The Market Day'

However, housekeeping could become almost impossible with relatively small changes in circumstances. Wilson's song had been published in 1854, but only four years earlier, Ned Corvan's account of the impact of a 'Rise in Coals' went down well with the audience in the 'Olympic' concert hall.[283] A price increase of just a few pence drove women to beg for a few shovelsful of coal to cook potatoes or stew. Despite his sympathy for the hard-up subjects of the song, Corvan ends the piece by encouraging people to think of the miners who 'toil hard and sair for sma' coals'[284]

6.5 Finally, there is a song which, as well as providing a vivid picture of some of Newcastle's 'eccentrics', reminds hearers about the way in which women's domestic duties extended beyond the home. Bobby Nunn's song, 'Blind Willie's Death' recounts how he meets Bella Roy in the street and heard of the fiddler's demise (on 20th July 1832, according to Ross's chapbook version[285]). Bella, sober for once, could confirm the death because she had just laid him out. 'Domestic duties' often included childbirth and deathbeds; for the women of Fair Mabel's household, these were experienced on the same occasion.[286]

6.6 Seccombe comments that women

> ...worked many more hours at home in a week than their husbands did elsewhere, even when the latter were regularly employed (working sixty hours per week in the mid nineteenth century.)[287]

Over the course of the century, women increasingly bore the burden of domestic responsibility on their own, although children (especially daughters) were given tasks to do. There is support in songs for Wollstonecraft's view of the resolution and perseverance required to fulfill domestic duties, but also some suggestion of the contentment and mutual support which was possible in the best situations.

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[283] Ibid., 390
[284] Ibid., 398
[285] *The Songs of the Tyne: Being a collection of Popular local Songs* (Newcastle: John Ross, n d)
[286] Bell, *Rhymes*, 149
[287] Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm*, 45

Chapter 7

7. Community and civic action

'Public spirit must be nurtured by private virtue ...'[288]

7.1 This comment comes at the end of a chapter in which Wollstonecraft writes about the necessity for both women and men to live up to the morals that they profess. Although her main theme seems to be double standards in sexual conduct, she also has a general concern that people should treat each other fairly. Women in England were active in several aspects of political protest and the concern for justice in the long eighteenth century, and those in the North East were no exception. Some, like the Darlington Quaker Elizabeth Pease, were committed to the cause of abolishing slavery.[289] Others were active in the Chartist movement, while others worked in support of the miners during strikes, sometimes described in songs and occasionally writing them. A report in the *Durham Chronicle* about female protestors was considered significant enough to be reproduced in the *Morning Chronicle* in London on 8th August 1825. During a strike by seamen, fights broke out in the 'unions, as they call them',[290] because the seamen wanted an additional allowance for casting ballast before entering the harbour. The newspapers reported that soldiers had to quell women who were heaving stones on to the ships, while shouting and hissing.

Poverty

7.2 Amongst the songs on social issues which were extant in the North East between 1790 and 1850 many are, in one way or another, about poverty. Some describe the suffering of the poor, and some challenge the situations which produced that suffering. 'Mary Hopper's Threatening Petition' provides an example of the lengths to which poor people had to go to to meet life's basic needs. It purports to be a verse written by a woman about to be prosecuted for stealing coal from Benwell Colliery. The undated manuscript includes a note by John Stainton from the colliery stating that the prosecution was discontinued and Mary Hopper given a supply of coal to avoid a repeat of the offence.[291] Although the

[288] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 256
[289] John Charlton, *Hidden Chains: The slavery business and North East England* (Newcastle: Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2008), 71
[290] *Durham Chronicle*, 8.8.1825
[291] Harker, *Bell manuscripts*, 96

spelling in the verse is a little erratic, it is more conventional than that of many songs of the early 19th century and the metre and story-telling of the verse suggest an author who is more literate than 'Mary Hopper' seems likely to have been.

7.3 The issue of how to deal with 'the poor' has always been, and continues to be, a major matter of concern to those responsible for maintaining the state, although the extent of statutory involvement in relieving poverty inevitably varies with the political colour of the administration. For several centuries prior to the nineteenth, the responsibility for the old, the ill, and the poor had lain in England with each individual parish, but the economically difficult early years of the nineteenth century brought the organization of poor relief to crisis point. In Gateshead, for example, the cost of providing for the poor through the poor rate rose from £1847 per annum in 1800 to £4500 in 1820[292]. Thomas Malthus, a Church of England clergyman, proposed in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798 that the old Poor Law should be abolished, and that, if people (or at least, poor people) were determined to reproduce, they should not be supported by the parish. Allowing people to be dependent would simply encourage further dependence.[293] Marshall's collection, printed in 1827, includes a song decrying 'Parson Malthus', 'A proud, hypocritical preacher, who feeds on tithe-pigs and good wine'[294]. No author is quoted, but the song may have been produced in response to a further edition of Malthus's works, published in 1826. The song advises:

Ye blithe British lads and ye lasses
Ne'er heed this daft, whimsical priest;
Get sweethearts in spite of such asses –
The *Bible* plan sure is the best:
Then away go in couples together,
And marry while you're in your prime,
And strive to agree with each other,
For life only lasts a short time![295]

[292] Manders, *Gateshead*, 216-7
[293] Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds*, 193
[294] Thompson, Shield, Midford, Robson, *A Collection of Songs,*118; Roud B123713
[295] Thompson, Shield, Midford, Robson, *A Collection of Songs,* 118. The song was also included in the collection's reprint in 1842, and in that edited by Robson in 1849, suggesting a continuing interest in the impact of social policy some years after the implementation of the New Poor Law.

7.4 The New Poor Law was passed in 1834, and began its introduction in the North of England a little later. The Act removed the responsibility for the poor from the local parish to a nationally-appointed union of parishes, and introduced the system of indoor relief in the workhouse. Families had to give up their homes to be admitted to the workhouse, and husbands, wives, and children were separated from each other. People were forced to undertake arduous and sometimes meaningless work, and 'Conditions in the workhouses were deliberately made harsh and unpleasant'[296]. The *Northern Liberator* described how, in their view (as a Radical paper) the Poor Law Union of Morpeth, Northumberland provided 'incontestable evidence of cruelty and oppression'[297] in the operation of the Poor Law in their area. The example given was that young women who had ended up in the workhouse as a result of having been seduced were being asked intrusive questions about their situation. The *Northern Liberator* also reported details of the trial of two women accused of the horrific torture of the apprentices in their care. The paper comments sarcastically that the Gateshead Guardians could learn from these women even more ways of mistreating the paupers in their workhouse.[298]

The implementation of the Poor Law caused widespread agitation all over England and Wales, with mass meetings and demonstrations, pamphlets, and speeches. Working-class women in particular were outraged by the new Act's policy on the workhouse, and 'were vocal and often violent participants in anti-Poor Law agitations'[299]. They were appalled by the idea that women could be separated from their children, or that poverty somehow made them unfit to be mothers. Additionally, their husbands' paid employment was often casual, so they lived under the constant threat that a short spell out of work could tip the balance which would find the whole family in the workhouse. The Poor Law was also opposed by some local politicians and magistrates reluctant to give up any of their power to those in London.[300] However, by 1859, 60 per cent of the country had established Poor Law Unions with their associated workhouses.

[296] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 237
[297] *Northern Liberator* 28.12.1839
[298] *Northern Liberator* 27.1.1838
[299] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 238
[300] Walvin, *English Urban Life*, 88

7.5 The recording in song of the experience of poverty in the North East is most extensively found in the material relating to the lives of the pitmen and their families brought together in Harker's collection.[301] Most of the works in this collection which feature women in some way are from 1844, though some appeared earlier. 'A Curious Dialogue', for example, is from a broadside from about 1815[302], and provides a somewhat idealised picture of life amongst the labouring poor. The husband is saved from despair at their situation by the wisdom of his wife, and her encouragement to trust in God. As usual, the woman is given the responsibility of keeping the family together and dealing with the emotional issues (as in paragraph 5.3):

Sweet husband, don't despair,
Avoid distracting care,
I will the burden bear
Along with you. ...
Bless God, we have our health,
And that is more than wealth,
Be thankful then.[303]

7.6 In Marshall's chapbook, *The Goldfinch*, he includes a song about a milkmaid who rejects the advances of a young man who meets her by chance 'As she sat milking her cow'[304]. The song rehearses the familiar themes of the dangers of seduction and losing the opportunity for marriage:

A fair maid is like a ship sailing,
She knows not how long she'll safe go,
For in every blast she's in danger,
You pretty maid milking your cow.

An old maid is like an old almanack,
Useless when once out of date,
If her ware is not sold in the morning,

[301] Harker, *NE pitmen*
[302] Ibid., 98
[303] Ibid., 94
[304] *The Goldfinch, a new song book containing celebrated songs* (Newcastle: Marshall); Roud S249260

At noon it goes at a low rate.[305]

It may be that this song, probably readily available in the 1820s, was the inspiration for one in Harker's collection, which he dates to 1832, following a strike with a successful outcome. A milkmaid, daughter of a pitman, meets a young man 'As she was sitting under her cow a milking'[306] and is concerned that the collier should belong to the union and do nothing that would threaten the miners' endeavours to get a fair wage. In the struggle for justice for the pitmen, the milkmaid in this song assertively challenges the young man, uninterested in society's requirement that she should be married off; she will choose her own suitor, who has to live up to her principles.

7.7 On 5th April 1844, the Great Strike began, seeking

> ... a return to customary rates of pay, the end of the Bond, the abolition of unjust fines, no more than a ten-hour day for boys and some sort of negotiating procedure to settle disputes.[307]

Despite the struggle of trying to survive on credit, and undermined by the use of blacklegs, the strikers maintained their enthusiasm until June. However, in August, some men began to return to work, and by the end of the month, the strike was over.

Harker records three songs from this period known to be written by women, although there is nothing to distinguish them from material produced by men. Indeed, Jane Knight even writes as though she were a man, speaking of 'our' leaders, tools, masters, and wages, and recording how 'Our wives and children are turned out, And camping out of doors'[308]. Elizabeth Gair, a collier's wife, produced 'The Colliery Union, A New Song' in 1844, and it appeared in broadsides in Wigan and North Shields.[309] Mrs Gair uses her song to encourage the striking miners, with a Biblical reference to the practical support given to the men. She ends with a reminder that victory can be achieved without resorting to violence. Mrs Mainwaring's piece 'The Collier's Complaint' is noted as having been

[305] *Goldfinch* 4
[306] Harker, *NE pitmen*, 137
[307] Ibid., 41
[308] Ibid., 240 'A New Song on the Pitmen's Grievances'
[309] Harker, *NE Pitmen*, 270

produced in Sheffield on 4th August 1844[310], as the strike was beginning to fail, and it appeared in the *Miner's Advocate* a few weeks later. The atmosphere evoked here is very different from that in the other women's songs, as she writes, as though a collier, of the demands of the work and the very basic rights the men have been demanding. Like most of the works in Harker's collection, the women's songs do not use dialect, and are written in a formal, even hymn-like, style. Mrs Gair's song is reminiscent of the popular Primitive Methodist hymns of the period, with a chorus to reinforce the message.

Songs and poems were produced during the Great Strike to raise money for the striking miners, and the fact that these three women contributed at least the works in Harker's collection reflects the way that husbands and wives laboured together to survive the months without work. 'The Song of the Oppressed', for example, encourages 'Let women's love and men's unite, That God may bless us in the fight'[311], while the pitman's wife in 'A New Song' is ready to advise the coal owner on how the men should be treated. Despite the disagreement over the song's origin and content[312], the song portrays a woman determined to have her say on the injustices suffered by the miners and their families.

Queen Caroline

7.8 The year after Peterloo, the 'Queen Caroline affair' engaged women and men of all classes and backgrounds in protest, counter-protest, vilification, and support in a way which, superficially, has echoes of the celebrity-obsessed culture of the 21st century, but in fact raised significant issues about marriage and the existence of double standards for the sexes.

Caroline and George, Prince of Wales, were unhappily married and had lived apart for several years. Caroline had been exiled to Europe, but in 1820, her husband was to be crowned as King George IV, and she was determined to return to England to claim her position as Queen. George was equally determined that she should not, accused her of committing adultery, and attempted to divorce her, which required a trial by the House of Lords. The fact that George had a mistress and even an illicit marriage made him a hypocrite in the eyes of many, and he was, in any case, deeply unpopular. Caroline's trial produced a variety of responses. Some radicals criticized the King's double standard, and

[310] Ibid., 303
[311] Ibid., 271
[312] Ibid., 295 & 60-61

felt his adultery justified his wife in taking a lover; some commentators believed that even if Caroline had committed adultery, that did not justify her mistreatment, while some newspapers berated both the Queen and her female supporters as shameless.

Most notable in the whole affair was the enormous volume of support for Caroline from women throughout England. 17,652 married women in London signed an address to her, and 11,047 'Females of Bristol' did likewise[313], along with 'Ladies of Edinburgh', 'Females of Newcastle upon Tyne', and women from Exeter[314]. Some women's friendly societies were named after her, such as the Queen Caroline Benefit Society in Gateshead[315]. Broadsheets provided songs of support and praise, some of which were written by women. In 1820, Marshall published a collection of songs supporting Caroline, sold for 2d each.[316] The songs included an encouragement to women to consider Caroline's mistreatment, and, just as they would not flinch from criticizing their own husbands, to speak out against the King's injustice. Caroline's supporters understood that, if a queen could be an abused wife, with an uncertain position, their own situation could be even more so. They refused to accept chastity as the only definition of womanhood, and praised Caroline's courage and her dignity in self-defence. When Caroline was finally aquitted by the House of Lords, there was considerable rejoicing in Newcastle. Mackenzie reports that, on 20th November 1820, houses in the town and in Gateshead were illuminated to show their support. An address of congratulations to the Queen was signed by nearly 7000 women from Newcastle and the vicinity, and another was sent from the Corporation.[317]

When George IV was finally crowned in 1821, insensitive coronation celebrations in Newcastle resulted in riots. These were described in songs, five of which were included in Marshall's 1827 collection. They report sailors cheering for the Queen, and crowds drinking her health. William Mid(t)ford contributed 'A Picture of Newcastle, or George the Fourth's Coronation', and records the involvement of the women who supported her:

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[313] Steinbach, *Women in England,* 233
[314] Anna Clark, 'Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820.' *Representations, No 31: The Margins of Identity in Nineteenth Century England*, Summer 1990, 47-68, 61
[315] Manders, *Gateshead*, 221
[316] *A Collection of New and popular Songs, dedicated to Queen Caroline of England,* (Newcastle: J Marshall, 1820), 8
[317] Mackenzie, *Newcastle*, 86

Then a female procession, to heighten the scene,
Paraded the streets with a bust of the Queen;
When her title was placed where a crown should have been –
Upon the crane top was its station.[318]

Caroline's popularity faded after she accepted an annuity from Parliament, and she died in 1821.[319] The people of Newcastle may have forgiven the King to a certain extent, as, when there was a music festival at the Theatre Royal in 1824, Madame Catalini included in her programme, 'God Save Great George our King'![320]

The abolition of the slave trade and Chartism

7.9 Women in the North East were very active in support of two major campaigns in the long eighteenth century: the abolition of the slave trade, and the Chartist movement. In both fields, there is extensive published evidence of female activity in raising money, signing petitions, and attending meetings in support of these causes.

7.10 Anti-slavery agitation began in the late 1780s, spreading through the country from London. Charlton records a letter published in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1792, in which a man reports that the women of his household had, after reading a pamphlet about slavery, given up the use of sugar and banned it from the tea table.[321] The Act abolishing the slave trade came into force in 1807, and enthusiasm for campaigning faded somewhat until opposition to slavery itself became more organized from around 1820. Support for further reform increased, with more petitions and the establishment of 'Ladies' Antislavery Societies'[322]. The organizers were usually middle class, although supporters came from a variety of backgrounds. Charlton records that over 6000 women from Newcastle, Gateshead, and the vicinity signed a petition calling for the immediate abolition of the slave trade, joining 187,000 specifically female petitions on this theme.[323]

[318] Thompson, Shield, Midforc, Robson, *A Collection of Songs*, 205; Roud B123795
[319] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 233
[320] *Songs from a Grand Musical Festival at the Theatre Royal October 5th, 6th, and 8th 1824* (Newcastle: J Marshall), 4
[321] Charlton, *Chains*, 27
[322] Charlton, *Chains*, 58
[323] Ibid., 67

7.11 Alongside the latter years of the anti-slavery activity, the Chartist Movement of the 1830s and 1840s not only mobilized working men and Radical reformers to its ranks, but also provided extensive opportunities for women from a variety of backgrounds to become involved, sometimes very visibly, in political activity. For example, at a public tea at South Shields Democratic Festival on 23rd February 1839, the following 'sentiment' was expressed:

> The ladies of South Shields, and may they use greater exertions for the emancipation of their native country than they even did for the slaves of the West Indies, nor ever desert the cause until success shall have crowned their efforts.[324]

The exhortation must have been effective, as fifty women then came forward to form a political union. However, not all female activism was so decorous. At a public meeting of Radical reformers in Stockton in 1839, a commercial traveller used some insulting expressions to describe some of the people present. A few women 'took him in hands and soundly "slapped his jaws" to the great amusement of the assembled thousands'.[325] It is interesting that, not only were there 'thousands' of people at the meeting (bearing in mind that this is a report of a Radical event in a Radical newspaper), but also that the women's behaviour should be viewed with amusement rather than criticism. Wearside also had its female Chartists, and the *Liberator* notes in its report of the quarterly meeting of the Women's Charter Association of Sunderland that, 'The women of Sunderland are indeed indefatigable in their patriotic exertions.'[326]

7.12 Despite the extensive involvement of women in this agitation, there seems to be little reference to them in the songs of the period. The protests in favour of Queen Caroline lasted for little more than a year, yet they merited a number of songs about the Queen herself, encouragement to women to support her, and a mention by one of the North East's popular songwriters. The much more prolonged female activity in relation to anti-slavery protest and Chartism produced a good many column-inches in the press, but relatively few songs, although some of the Chartist hymns were written by women.

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[324] *Northern Liberator* 23.2.1839
[325] *Northern Liberator* 27.7.1839
[326] *Northern Liberator* 7.9.1839

Marshall published *The Radical Reformers' New Song Book, being a choice collection of Patriotic Songs* in the early 1820s, but the many broadsides in the Bodleian Library, for example, include only eleven songs with references to Chartism; most are scornful about campaigners, and the references to women are generally insulting. For example, 'The Chartists are Coming', printed by Hodges of Seven Dials sometime between 1846 and 1854 derides the supposed benefits of the Charter, and claims people are promised

Instead of red herrings we'll live on fat geese,
And lots of young women at two pence a-piece.[327]

'The Chartists all are going mad' is, at least, not reticent about its theme! It includes a supposed contrast of views about the Charter:

The ladies too have warrants bright
and they must all turn out and fight.
Ladies maids with clarence boots,
house-maids, kitchen maids, and cooks.
Queen vic. declared she'd have a tustle,
and kill the chartists with her bustle.[328]

Again, this was published in London, by C Paul on 12th July 1848. Only two of the Chartist songs in the Bodleian collection were published by North East printers. 'The Cotton Spinners Farewell' was printed by Fordyce in 1840, and purports to be the parting words of men transported for political activism.[329] Huntley of Sunderland printed 'Peggy Potts' speech to poor folks, at Sunderland's election' in 1851, and the song gives a vivid picture of this woman, who is one of the 'true-arted fishwives that live at Shellhill'.[330] Peggy Potts's assertiveness and grasp of the political situation echoes that of her Newcastle counterpart, Euphy Scott, some thirty years earlier, with the same lack of concern for the niceties of polite language. She advises her hearers to ignore the blandishments of those standing for office:

[327] Bodleian, Firth c.14(184); Roud B4281
[328] Bodleian, Firth c.16(39)
[329] Bodleian, Johnson Ballads 1945; Roud B36108
[330] Bodleian, Harding B 11(2984)

But the hyel kit belangs to the aud tory negurs, *The whole lot belongs to the old Tory niggers,*
That slouter'd the wimen at cussed Peterloo. *That slaughtered the women at cursed Peterloo*

...

Hurra for the charter, an' doun wi' the tories,
They'll starve the poor people if they had their will.[331]

Like Euphy Scott, the Wearside fishwife's fame or notoriety lasted for some years. When the *Newcastle Courant* reported on the opening of Sunderland's new fish market in 1866, it was recorded that 'the well-known Peggy Potts, brandishing a trowel' tried to take part in the stone-laying ceremony. When Councillor Barnes, who had the official responsibility for this, gave the foundation stone the customary tap with a trowel, Peggy elbowed her way forward and did the same.[332]

7.13 I have not found any songs about women's involvement in the anti-slavery campaign, although, of course, this does not mean that there are none! Perhaps the fact that much of the activism came from the middle classes may account for some of this, as so many of the 'local' songs seem to describe, celebrate, or mock working class people. There is, however, a song written by a woman, Jane Harvey, which links the early campaigning with concern for the poor. Harvey's 'Lines on the Corn Bill' was written in March 1815, and ends with criticism of those whose concern for the slaves overlooks the poor of their own country, a not uncommon response then and now:

Nor let our annals ever more record,
That men are here, who, far as Afric's shore,
Could raise the cry of "Slavery, be no more!"
And yet, to feeling, pity, justice, dead,
Can hear the poor of Britain cry for bread![333]

[331] Ibid.
[332] *Newcastle Courant* 24.8.1866
[333] James Hepburn, *A Book of Scattered Leaves: Poetry of Poverty in Broadside Ballads of Nineteenth-Century England, Volume 1* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 99

7.14 The little there is in song about North East women's involvement in social issues suggests that they would have met with Wollstonecraft's approval. Many women in the region were committed to campaigns for justice in a variety of fields, and expressed their concern by raising money, signing petitions, and speaking out, as well as in personal actions such as giving up slave-produced sugar. Some of this activity was unconventional, and perhaps writers did not approve of it enough to produce songs, even in Radical Newcastle. Perhaps they suspected that their potential audiences might disapprove. Whatever the reason, looking back with a 21st century eye, it seems a pity that the efforts of women seeking justice some two hundred years ago was not recognized in more popular forms.

Chapter 8

8. Reflections and conclusions

8.1 In this final chapter, I will review and reflect on the findings of the research, exploring how far it is possible to reach any secure conclusions about what the work has revealed. I will also consider the potential for further research in this area.

8.2 The research was directed at uncovering the representation of women in North East songs, and it is appropriate to begin a reflection on the findings by considering which women appear in the songs. The range of female experience depicted is striking, from Queen Caroline to Jeannie Sutton, the desperately poor whore, and between those extremes, the aristocratic Mabel of Wallington, the hard-working quayside fishwife, the collier's cherished sweetheart, and the abused wife of a drunken keelman, among many others. The reasons for their appearance in the songs are also many and varied, and dependent, to some extent, on who wrote them, as well as on a song culture which made this range and diversity of material possible. This remarkable song culture allows for an interest in and acceptance of a continuum of themes ranging from everyday experience to the doing of the élite and the lives of social outcasts.

8.3 As paragraph 1.22 notes, almost all the songs of the period were written by men, and often by those with education or in a skilled trade, like the schoolmaster J P Robson and Mitford the shoemaker. Some of these songs were written for publication in a collection, sometimes dependent upon subscriptions from purchasers, or for the theatre, music hall, or informal social gathering. Others did earn financial rewards for author or publisher, but their main purpose was to support a cause, either to raise awareness or money, like several of the works written during miners' strikes in the nineteenth century. The intended purpose of a song would be likely to influence its content, and the depiction of a woman in a song destined to entertain the Theatre Royal's enthusiastic audiences would almost certainly be different from, for example, the portrait of a miner's wife, starving and homeless because of the oppression of the pit owners, although, as paragraph 6.4 records, Corvan's song about poor families' difficulties resulting from a rise in the price of coal

'literally took his audience by storm'[334] when performed at the Olympic concert hall. Regardless of their purpose, however, many – perhaps most – of the songs examined as part of this research represent their subjects, whether male or female, in a conventional way which would probably have irritated the Radical Mary Wollstonecraft and pleased conservative Hannah More. This analysis has been extensively explored in the foregoing chapters, and will not be rehearsed again here, but there are further questions to be asked of the material, which I will now consider.

8.4 One of the aims of the research was to investigate whether the representation of women in song changed over the period covered. Now that I have studied a number of songs (over one hundred are referred to in this dissertation, and many more were examined), I believe that considerably more work would be required to make an informed assessment of this. I found few easily-identifiable changes relating to the portrayal of women. There were certainly more songs based on rural situations earlier in the period, and by the 1840s, songs were almost all about life in various parts of Tyneside. This is hardly surprising, given the urbanisation of the area over the years, and the growth of concert halls in towns. The songs also reflect changes in everyday life, such as the introduction of Hackney coaches in Newcastle[335], the illumination of St Nicholas's clock[336], and the building of the High Level Bridge[337]. As Chapter 5 points out, my perception is that, as the attitude to women's participation in paid work changed, this was reflected in some North East songs. However, this may be a quirk of Allan's editing, and there is scope for further research in this area.

The period covered by this research ends at a point where there were, in any case, significant changes in Tyneside's musical life. There were changes in the group of people who wrote songs. Henry Robson died in 1850, William Mitford in 1851, and Bobby Nunn in 1853, the same year as impressario Billy Purvis. At the same time, Ned Corvan, George Ridley, and Joe Wilson were moving towards the height of their song-writing success. When Corvan died in 1865, Wilson was ready to replace him as the star of music hall,

[334] Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 390
[335] Robert Emery, *Hackney Coach Customers*, in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, 293. First published 1825, relating to events in 1824.
[336] Bobby Nunn, *The Fiery Clock Fyece*, ibid., 338, relating to an event in 1829.
[337] J P Robson, *The High Level Bridge*, ibid., 359.

writing his greatest songs between 1864 and 1866.[338] The Tyneside music hall was increasing its professionalism and popularity, while changes continued in the development of printed material. Allan brought out his first small book of Tyneside songs in 1862, quickly followed, in response to popular demand by further editions in 1863 and 1864. By the 1870s, Allan had a virtual monopoly in printing on Tyneside, in contrast with the proliferation of publishers earlier in the century. This suggests that my research leads into a new period where songs and their mediation have changed, and this may be worthy of closer study in how the repertory portrays women.

8.5 It is probably fruitless to speculate how far the songs which encouraged women to fulfil their nineteenth century destiny of marriage and home helped to reinforce the inevitability of that outcome; that would require a much more extensive record of personal experience than is available. It would be necessary to know which songs were heard or read by which women, and how they responded to them, and this information, on the whole, does not exist. No doubt this is due in part to such information probably having been considered unimportant, but women's thoughts and understandings were not, in any case, well documented. Steinbach points out that

> ...very few personal writings by women (or non-elite men) survive. This is partly because fewer were produced, as female literacy always lagged behind male literacy, but also because the personal papers of male heads of household were more likely to be preserved than women's papers.[339]

Some songs, however, seem to be considered to have the potential to influence hearers for good or ill, regardless of the historical period. O'Connell records how an Association was established in 1792/3 in response to the fear of the influence of the French Revolution. Members of the group printed large numbers of 'loyal songs' which they disseminated via ballad singers because they believed that

> ... anything written in verse and especially to an old English tune ... made a more fixed impression on the

[338] Harker, in Allan, *Tyneside Songs*, xxii
[339] Steinbach, *Women in England*, 2

minds of the younger and lower class of people ...[340]

Repressive governments have been known to ban 'folk songs' because, along with language, costume, and other manifestations of local culture, they may be thought to support an identity or communal memory which the regime would wish to see obliterated. Shepherd comments on the power of music to challenge dominant forms of social, political, or economic control,[341] while Gammon notes 'the transfixing power of musical experience' and 'the ability of music to transform experience'.[342]

8.6 If music, and song in particular, has such influence, it seems reasonable to expect that the very large body of popular songs available in the North East in the early ninteenth century must have had some impact beyond a few moments' enjoyment. Even if the songs in this research did not form opinion, they certainly reflected it in some classes and social groups. The regular repetition of favourites such as 'Nanny of the Tyne' and 'The Pitman's Courtship' reinforced the picture of idealised womanhood which gave Wollstonecraft such cause for concern, and fed into what is now known as the 'cycle of stereotyping'. Briefly, this is the model in which a particular representation of a group is repeatedly presented as true or valid, which reinforces the belief that the original representation must therefore be true. A more extensive examination of the numbers of conventional and unconventional representations of women might be helpful in attempting to assess the potential they had in supporting the cycle of stereotyping.

8.7 In most of the subject areas examined in this research, a substantial body of song material was produced on Tyneside between 1790 and 1850. This at least reflected and may in some way have been constitutive of the local experience of women. The very localized nature of the repertory and the volume of material seems to be unique, and a remarkable number of the songs popular in the period are still enjoyed today. What is it about these songs which, in some cases, have been in use for more than two hundred years, that still engages people and makes them want to hear or perform them? Shepherd, in defining 'popular music', describes it as

[340] O'Connell, *Popular Print*, 143, from British Museum manuscript.
[341] John Shepherd, 'Difference and Power in Music', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and sexuality in musical scholarship*, ed Ruth A Solie (London: University of California Press Ltd, 1995), 59
[342] Gammon, *Desire, Drink, & Death*, 83

> '... music that has lain outside the immediate and effective control of those with power and influence, and that has spoken to the everyday lives and realities of "ordinary" people.'[343]

The songs identified in this project are, in the main, about aspects of 'everyday lives and realities' involving themes such as love, family, work, and disappointment, which are still realities for us. Those realities are located in a place which, for many devotees of the songs, is 'home', with all that that means.

[343] Shepherd, 'Difference & Power', 62

Appendix 1

'The Pitman's Courtship'

A comparison between the original and the parody

Mitford version	Parody
Wind softly blowing from West and sun shining as narrator steals close beside Lukey & Bessy to hear conversation.	Narrator on way from work and sees Jemmy & Peggy. Slides by side of a hill to hear them, with only a valley between (sarcastic, presumably!).
Notes idyllic childhood and adult meeting.	No mention of childhood or meeting.
Bessy will have a shop, and Lukey will help her when he comes home from work.	Jemmy and Peggy will work together as hucksters or travelling hawkers.
Stock to include sweets, candles, wax dolls, pick-shafts, besoms, fruit, decorated paste-eggs, snuff, and tobacco.	Stock to include fruit, sweets, and spice-cake, a more down-to-earth selection.
Bessy will appear like a lady as she stands at the counter in a muslin dress, and she will have a pony or ass to ride into town.	Jemmy will buy Peggy a 'canny new gown' which will make her look like a lady when she arrives at the miners' pay house to sell the goods. She will have a pony to ride from Tyneside to Wearside to sell.
Bessy trades only from the shop.	Peggy has to travel extensively north and south of the Tyne, following miners' pay-fortnights. She will take her full 'allowance' of ale, and eating and drinking will make her 'as fat as a whale'. The amount of drink consumed will make her likely to fall down.
Song ends with Lukey's proposal that they start arrangements for a Whitsun wedding.	Jemmy plans to meet Peggy when he comes from the pit next night.

Appendix 2

'Elsie Marley'

A comparison between versions of various dates

Ritson 1792	Bell 1812	Allan 1862 - 1891
Elsie Marley is grown so fine, She wont get up to serve her swine, But lies in bed till eight or nne, And surely she does take her time. *And do you ken Elsie Marley, Honey?* *The wife who sells the barley, honey;* *She wont get up to serve her swine,* *And do you ken Elsie Marley, honey?* Elsie Marley is so neat, It is hard for one to walk the street, But every lad and lass they meet, Cries do you ken Elsie Marley, honey? Elsie keeps wine, gin, and ale, In her house below the dale, Where every tradesman up and down, Does call and spend his half-a-crown. The farmers as they come that way, They drink with Elsie every day, And all the fiddlers for to play The tune of Elsie Marley, honey. The pitmen and the keelmen trim, They drink bumbo made of gin And for to dance they do begin The tune of Elsie Marley, honey. The sailors they will call for flip, As soon as they come from the ship, And then begin to dance and skip, To the tune of Elsie Marley, honey. Those gentlemen that go so fine, They'll treat her with a bottle of wine, And freely they'll sit down and dine Along with Elsie Marley, honey. So to conclude these lines I've penned Hoping there's none I do offend And thus my merry joke doth end Concerning Elsie Marley, honey.	Elsie Marley is grown so fine, She wont get up to serve her swine, But lies in bed till eight or nne, And surely she does take her time. *And do you ken Elsie Marley, honey?* *The wife that sells the barley, honey?* *She's lost her pocket and all her money,* *Aback o' the bush I' th' garden, honey.* Other verses are the same as the version in Ritson, with the addition of the verse below: Elsie Marley wore a straw hat, Now she's got a velvet cap, She may thank Lambton men for that, Do you ken Elsie Marley, honey.	Variations from Ritson version: Elsie keeps **rum**, gin, and ale, In her house below the dale, Where every tradesman up and down, Does call and spend his half-a-crown. Includes this verse with the note 'This verse, not in Ritson, is given by Sharpe as current in the neighbourhood. By the Lambton lads were meant the five brothers of the house of Lambton, all bachelors of a certain period, and all admirers of Elsie Marley.' Elsie Marley wore a straw hat, Now she's got a velvet cap, She may thank Lambton men for that, Do you ken Elsie Marley, honey. The last two verses are omitted.

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